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Nick Carter Stories

BLOOD MONEY

or Nick Carters Personal Letter

385 Michigan St.

NICK CARTER STORIES

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BLOOD MONEY;

Or, NICK CARTER'S PERSONAL LETTER.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

THE UNANSWERED TELEPHONE CALL.

"When was this letter received, Joseph?" Nick Carter inquired, addressing his manservant. "The postmark is illegible and the letter is not dated."

"It came in the last delivery, sir, on Monday," replied Joseph, gazing gravely at the detective.

Nick's countenance denoted that he regarded the communication somewhat seriously. He had arrived home at seven o'clock that morning, only ten minutes before, after an absence of three days in Boston, having returned on the night express.

He had found on the slide of the desk in his study the letter mentioned, with the seal then unbroken. It was written with a pen in a flowing, feminine hand, and on the lower left-hand corner of the envelope were the two words, heavily underlined: "Strictly Personal."

Nick read the letter and then turned to question Joseph, who was about to take the detective's suit case to his room.

"On Monday, eh?" said Nick, frowning slightly. "Three days ago. Has Chick seen it?"

"I think not, Mr. Carter."

"Why not? It is understood, Joseph, that he shall open all of my letters when I am away from home, even if they are marked personal."

"I know it, sir," said Joseph, in some embarrassment. "But this letter is marked strictly personal—strictly, sir."

"And you suppose that that word strictly made it an exception to the rule?"

"I did, sir," Joseph admitted. "So I brought it here and laid it on your desk, sir, instead of taking it to Chick or Patsy."

"Don't do it again, Joseph," said Nick simply, though he evidently was much annoyed.

"I am very sorry, sir, that I have made a mistake," Joseph said regretfully. "I supposed I was doing perfectly right. I hope, Mr. Carter, that nothing serious will result from my having mislaid the letter."

"Possibly not," Nick replied. "You know, nevertheless, that most of my mail is very important. It should be read as soon as received. A delay of two or three days, as in this case, might cost some confiding client a fortune, possibly his life. Don't let it happen again, Joseph."

"I will not, sir."

"Chick is at home?"

"Yes, sir. He and Patsy—but I hear them on the stairs, sir. They are coming down to breakfast."

"That's all, Joseph."

Nick reverted to the letter, and was reading it again when his two chief assistants, Chick Carter and Patsy Garvan, entered the room. He greeted them cordially, but Chick was quick to notice the look of annoyance in the detective's eyes.

"What's doing?" he inquired. "Something gone wrong?"

"Well, not quite right," Nick replied. "This letter came Monday afternoon. It is marked strictly personal, and Joseph brought it here instead of taking it to you or Patsy."

"Great Scott!" Chick exclaimed. "I haven't happened to see it lying here. I should have noticed it nine times out of ten."

"Gee! Joseph don't often throw a shoe in that way," said Patsy.

"Is it important, Nick?"

"That's an open question. Read it."

Chick read the letter aloud for Patsy's benefit. It is subjoined verbatim:

"No. — Amsterdam Avenue.

"*Mr. Nicholas Carter, New York City.*

"MY DEAR MR. CARTER: I beg that you will visit me at your earliest convenience. It is very, very important that I should see you. The circumstances are such, however, that

I cannot wisely venture to your house. I fear that I am being watched, and that I am in great personal danger.

You will remember me, no doubt, as a woman of many vices, and guilty of much evil. Believe me, all that is a hideous memory. I am repentant. I have reformed. I wish to do what is right. I wish to atone for the past, Mr. Carter, and to rectify a great wrong, and I need your aid. I beg that you will visit me immediately after receiving this letter. I would not write you thus without genuine remorse and very serious occasion. Please come quickly, and oblige, yours sincerely,

"NELL LACKLAND."

Chick repeated the name of the writer with some surprise after reading the letter.

"Nell Lackland!" he exclaimed. "Why, she's Martin Morley's niece, that crook-criminal lawyer who was back of Phil Dacey's gambling house."

"Yes, the same," Nick replied.

"But what's the meaning of such a letter?"

"That's the question."

"Gee! it may be a put-up job, chief, to get back at you," said Patsy. "Dacey swore that he would break even with you when he got out of Sing Sing. There are members of his gang who wouldn't sweat a hair over shooting you from an alley, or knifing you in the dark."

"But Dacey is in Sing Sing, canned for ten years and Martin Morley is under the sod," said Chick. "He committed suicide in his cell within a week after his conviction. It may be, by Jove, that his niece is out for vengeance, and that this letter is the first step in a put-up job, as Patsy suggested."

"Nell Lackland is a bad egg," added Patsy. "She and that running mate of hers, Violet Hyde, are capable of any degree of treachery. Both were lucky enough to escape conviction in the Dorrington-Vaughn robbery trial, owing to lack of positive evidence and Morley's sworn statement that his niece had no hand in the crime, but it's a good safe gamble that Nell Lackland has not reformed and never will. She has something up her sleeve, chief, and that letter is designed to lure you into some kind of a trap. Chuck it into the wastebasket."

Nick glanced at the letter again and shook his head.

"I don't agree with you, Patsy," he said thoughtfully.

"No?"

"It does not read like a tricky letter. There is an atmosphere of truth about it. The first thought of this woman, if framing up such a letter as you suggest, would have been that I would not credit her repentance. She would have invented some other and seemingly more plausible story. The mere fact that she did not, convinces me that she means what she says."

"Mebbe so, chief, but it sticks in my crop."

"Besides, I happen to know that she has not been in the running with the fast set since the conviction of Dacey's gang and the suicide of her uncle six weeks ago. I have not laid eyes on her in the Tenderloin, where Violet Hyde now is cutting a wider swath than ever, and fast going to the dogs. If this letter had come from her, who is much more bold and unscrupulous, but far less intelligent than Nell Lackland, I should be more inclined to that opinion."

"But why, chief, if she really is so anxious to see you, has she not telephoned to you?" questioned Patsy. "She easily could have——"

"By Jove, that reminds me," Chick cut it.

"Of what?" Nick asked.

"A woman telephoned to you about eight o'clock night before last. I answered the call, informing her that you were out of town and would not return before Thursday."

"Did you get her name?"

"I inquired, and also of what her business consisted, but she merely replied that she wanted to see you, and that perhaps Thursday would do. She then hung up the receiver and shut me off. As I recall it, I now think it was Nell Lackland's voice."

Nick glanced at his watch.

"Half past seven," he remarked. "A little early to find her out of bed. We'll have breakfast and then ring her up. I'll find out what she has on her mind, and whether she still wishes to see me."

It was half past eight when Nick, Chick, and Patsy entered the business office, where Nick at once attempted to get in telephone communication with the residence of the late Martin Morley, criminal lawyer, secret backer of Dacey's gambling house, prime mover in the big jewel robbery committed at the wedding of Daniel Dorrington and Beatrice Vaughn eight weeks before, and finally a suicide in Sing Sing after receiving a sentence of ten years for the crime.

His chief confederate, Phil Dacey, together with several of the gang who had taken part in the robbery, now were in the penitentiary, though Nick had heard that Dacey was making strenuous efforts to obtain a new trial on the strength of exceptions then before the court of appeals. That he would meet with any success, however, the detective did not have a moment's belief.

Nick listened with the telephone receiver at his ear, and the exchange operator presently announced:

"They don't answer. I'll ring them again."

Nearly a minute passed.

"They don't answer," repeated the operator.

"Try once more, please," Nick requested.

Another minute passed and then came the same announcement:

"They don't answer."

"Thank you," said Nick. "I'll try later."

Instead, however, he at once turned to Patsy and said, referring to his chauffeur:

"Ring for Danny and the touring car. We'll go up there."

"You could not raise her?" questioned Chick, then busy opening the morning mail.

"No."

"You suspect something wrong?"

"That's my hunch," said Nick, a bit gravely. "I'll confirm, or dispel it, with a personal visit. I shall return before you have finished the morning mail, unless—well, we shall see."

"Let me go with you, chief," requested Patsy. "There might be something doing."

"That was my intention," Nick replied, slipping the strictly personal letter into his pocket.

It was precisely nine o'clock when Nick and Patsy alighted from the touring car nearly a block south of the dwelling occupied by the late Martin Morley, and from which Nell Lackland, his only relative, had seen him buried several weeks before.

Nick wondered whether the lawyer's untimely fate, end-

ing a career of hypocrisy and vice, had served to turn the woman from the downward path which she, too, though young, handsome, and with all of the good things of life before her, had begun to tread.

CHAPTER II.

FOUND DEAD.

It was an attractive house somewhat back from the avenue, from which the front yard was divided by an ornamental iron fence. It occupied a corner lot of considerable size, with a driveway entrance from the side street, leading to a stone garage in the rear grounds, which abutted on a much larger estate fronting on Riverside Drive.

Nick viewed the house with increasing misgivings, while approaching it with Patsy. The roller shades of all of the front and side windows on the ground floor were closely drawn, preventing any view within. The upper windows were closed, also the front gate, and an ordinary observer would have inferred that the occupants of the house were away.

Nick rang the doorbell and waited, but the summons brought no response from within. Just then, an elderly woman who lived in the next house, and who came to the window to water a box of plants, said:

"Miss Lackland is not at home, sir. That is to say—I don't think that she is."

Nick noticed the qualification, or he might have taken it for granted that the woman's first assertion was correct. He stepped toward the window and questioned her.

"Have you seen her recently?" he asked.

"She was at home Tuesday evening, as usual, but I have not seen her since. She had a visitor about half past eight. He came in a taxicab, and she must have gone away with him."

"A gentleman, eh?"

"Well, really, I ought not to have said that, for I did not see the visitor. I heard the taxi stop at Miss Lackland's gate, however, and I know it waited there until nearly ten o'clock. I looked out and saw it there, and also heard it driven away, but I did not see any one, not even the chauffeur. Not having seen her since and observing that all of the curtains are lowered, I have supposed that she went away with a friend, or some friends."

"Does she have many visitors?" Nick inquired.

"No, indeed, sir!" exclaimed the woman significantly. "She has been living very quietly since her uncle died."

"Has she any servants?"

"No, sir. She is keeping house alone. She has been very much changed since——"

"I know all about her uncle's career and suicide," said Nick, when the woman hesitated. "Miss Lackland has been behaving herself, I take it."

"Well, that expresses what I had in mind. She used to be very gay, but of late she has been quite the opposite. She is very reserved, and seldom goes out."

"Have you seen any of her visitors?"

"Only a young woman with whom she has always been quite friendly. I think her name is Hyde."

"I know her, also," said Nick. "Have you seen Miss Hyde lately?"

"Not for more than a month. She may have called in the evening, of course, when I should not have seen her."

"Have you seen any strangers loitering around here who appeared to have an interest in this house?"

"I have not."

"Did any one call yesterday?"

"I saw no one but the letter carrier. He delivered a letter and rang the bell, but Miss Lackland did not come to the door."

"How, then, did the carrier deliver the letter?"

"He left it in a metal box at one side of the door. That is his custom, though he always rings the bell. I watched to see whether Miss Lackland came to get it, for I had been wondering whether she was away."

"At what time did the carrier leave the letter?"

"About five o'clock, sir, on his last delivery. I was sewing at my sitting-room window. That's why I happened to see him."

"It should still be in the box, unless Miss Lackland has removed it?"

"Certainly."

Nick thanked the woman for her information, then returned to the front door. On the casing at one side of it was the letter box mentioned, from which only one having a key could remove a letter. By lifting the cover of the slot to a certain angle, however, it was possible to see the entire interior. Nick raised it and peered in.

The letter box was—empty.

"Not there?" questioned Patsy, who had overheard the foregoing interview.

"No. There is nothing in the box."

"Gee! that's strange."

Nick did not reply for a few moments. He was sizing up all of the circumstances thus far brought to his notice.

"Strange—yes!" said he presently. "She posted her letter to me on Monday. Not receiving a visit from me in response to it, she tried to telephone to me Tuesday evening. Chick set the time at eight o'clock. At half past eight this next-door neighbor heard a taxi stop here, which remained until nearly ten, and Miss Lackland has not been seen since. Did she leave home with her visitor? If not, why has the house been apparently deserted since then? If she did, on the other hand, what has become of the letter left here by the carrier yesterday, Wednesday afternoon?"

"Things don't dovetail, chief, for fair," said Patsy. "There seems to be something wrong."

"There is something wrong," Nick now said confidently. "Come with me. We'll try to get a look through one of the windows."

He led the way through a yard abutting on the side street, from which a cement walk led to a narrow veranda and a side door. Through none of the front or side windows, however, could a view of any of the rooms be obtained, and Nick then proceeded to the back of the house. There, in a strip of earth between the house and the cement driveway leading to the garage, two distinct imprints caught his eyes. They were oval in shape and nearly five feet apart, one about three feet from the driveway, the other about the same distance from a low rise of steps to the back door.

"Ah! here is something," Nick exclaimed. "Two footprints."

"Footprints!" echoed Patsy, bending to examine them.

"Most of the sole of each boot, though the heels left no impression. That, together with the depth of the im-

prints and the distance between them, shows that the man was running."

"Gee! but notice the size of them," said Patsy. "The man must be a giant."

"He wears a very large shoe, I'll admit," said Nick. "But men of moderate size sometimes have large feet."

"That's true."

"Notice the direction in which he was moving. He evidently came from the driveway gate, but instead of following the walk, he ran obliquely across this strip of earth toward the back door. Two strides took him from the cement driveway to the back door."

"He was in a rush, all right, or the imprints wouldn't be so deep and so far apart. He was going at top speed, and nearly on his toes."

"Obviously," said Nick. "That's why his heels left no impression. There is only a single imprint of each shoe, but they reveal one other fact that must be remembered."

"What's that, chief?"

"The man toes in, Patsy, as badly as an Indian."

"Sure! I ought to have noticed it. A big man who toes in—by gracious, that might serve to identify the rascal, in case there has been anything doing here."

"Providing, also, that he was the rascal," said Nick, approaching the back steps.

He stopped short upon reaching them. On the top step, about an inch from the threshold of the door was a small round spot, too distinct and sharply defined to be overlooked. It resembled one of the small red wafers with which documents are frequently sealed.

Nick crouched to examine it.

It was a single drop of blood.

"By Jove, this points to blacker business," said Nick, touching the telltale spot with the tip of his finger.

"What is it? Blood?" questioned Patsy.

"Nothing else."

"Gee! That may spell murder."

"It is perfectly dry and hard. It has been here since—well, since Tuesday night, if I were to venture a guess. We'll find out, Patsy, who and what is in this house."

"Going in, eh?"

"Yes."

"I think we are justified in forcing an entrance."

"We can do better," said Nick. "No force will be necessary."

He had examined the lock of the door while speaking. It contained no key. Producing a ring containing several skeleton keys, however, Nick quickly found one that would unlock the door, and he led the way into the kitchen.

"H'm, that's strange, also," said he, after a sharp glance at the floor, then at the door casing and the wall near by.

"The key is missing," said Patsy, quick to see the point.

"Exactly. It has not fallen to the floor, nor is there any nail or shelf on which it might have been kept. Whoever went out last must have locked the door and removed the key."

"But Nell Lackland would not have gone out this way, chief, if she left with visitors to take a taxi at the front door."

"That's the very point," said Nick. "Some one else went out this way and closed the door. We'll look farther."

The kitchen adjoined a dining room, in which neatness and order prevailed. Nothing appeared to be out of place, or to have been disturbed.

Stepping into the hall, Nick glanced into a sitting room, then into a front parlor, and finally into a library on the south side of the house, the farthest from the side street mentioned.

It was there that they found her—dead.

She was lying on a couch near one of the walls. She was clad in a simple evening gown of pale blue. Her head was resting on a silk pillow. Her upturned face wore the peaceful expression seen only on the face of the dead, or of saints and nuns. One fair arm, bare to the elbow, hung over the couch with her hand touching the floor.

A few inches from this hand lay—an empty vial.

The cork was on a table near by.

The room was apparently in customary order—barring that still, white form revealed in the subdued light that came through the drawn curtains.

"Perhaps Thursday will do!"

Nick Carter recalled the words she had said to Chick when she telephoned to him on Tuesday evening, after receiving no response to her appealing and somewhat pathetic letter.

"Perhaps Thursday will do!"

And this was—Thursday.

Nick and Patsy were less surprised and shocked than if they had anticipated nothing of the kind. Nick touched the woman's rigid arm and laid his hand on her head.

"Dead for many hours—probably since Tuesday," he said gravely.

"It looks like suicide," said Patsy, pointing to the empty vial.

Nick picked it up without replying and smelled of it. He could detect a faint, hardly perceptible odor and signs of dregs in the bottom of the small glass bottle. But he could not determine what it had contained. He replaced the cork in the vial and slipped both into his vest pocket.

CHAPTER III.

THE ASH TRAIL.

It was on Thursday, the third of October, that Nell Lackland was found dead on the couch in her library. Superficially viewing the case, it did, indeed, appear to be one of suicide, as Patsy Garvan had said.

Nick Carter, however, already had come to a different conclusion.

"No, Patsy, it's not a case of suicide," said he.

"Murder?"

"I think so."

"But there are no indications of a struggle, no signs of violence," Patsy argued. "Neither of her garments, nor even her hair, are in disorder."

"Very true."

"Could she have been murdered without a struggle? Gee! that seems hardly possible. There isn't the slightest sign of an assault. It looks to me, chief, more like a case of suicide."

"That, Patsy, assuming that I am right, may be precisely what her assassins intended it to look like," said Nick. "In spite of appearances, however, the suicide theory is not tenable. There are too many conflicting circumstances."

"Too many?"

"Her letter to me, the apprehensions she expressed, her fear that she was being watched, and that she was in great personal danger, her phone call on Tuesday evening, her reticence after learning that I was away, the fact that she received one or more visitors later the same evening, whom she may have expected and feard, perhaps, in view of her earlier phone call—these, together with the fact that her death evidently occurred that same night, convince me that she was murdered."

"I guess you're right, chief, after all."

"There are other points—the footprints outside, the drop of blood on the step, the fact that the key of the back door is missing," Nick added. "These also tend to confirm my suspicion. Take it from me, Patsy, Nell Lackland was murdered last Tuesday evening. We'll see, now, whether we can discover how, why, and by whom."

"That vial may have contained poison," suggested Patsy. "It may have been given to her by another."

"In view of her fears, Nell Lackland would not have taken the contents of it voluntarily, unless she knew positively of what it consisted. I will have a chemist examine it and see what he can learn. It is barely possible that a few drops run out on the carpet. They could in that case be analyzed."

Nick dropped on all fours and began to inspect it near where the vial was lying. It was a dark-red Wilton carpet, with a scroll and flower pattern, on which any light-colored stain, or substance, could be readily seen.

Nick could find, however, no sign of any liquid that had flowed from the vial. The carpet where it had lain was perfectly clean. But he discovered, instead, here and there on the dark-red background, numerous small gray specks, some a trifle larger than others, as if particles of some kind of powder had fallen on the floor.

"Lift those curtains, Patsy, and let in some light," he directed, taking a small magnifying glass from his pocket. "These specks on the carpet may signify something, if I can determine what they are."

"Here are others in the side hall," said Patsy. "They look like coarse dust, or——"

"Ah, I have it!" Nick interrupted, after inspecting some of the tiny particles with his lens.

"What are they?" questioned Patsy, after lifting the curtains.

"Ashes from a fireplace, a stove, or a furnace."

"There is a kitchen range, but no fireplace. The house is heated with a furnace. Here is one of the registers."

"That simplifies matters. We must find out where the ashes came from."

"They may have blown in from the kitchen when the fire was made last."

"Nothing of the kind," said Nick, still busy inspecting various parts of the carpet with his lens. "They are not evenly enough distributed for that. They were tracked in here on the soles of some person's shoes—more than one person, too, unless I am much mistaken. Here are some in the side hall, also, as you said."

"They may have been tracked in from the refuse barrel in the back yard."

"I don't think so. There are no signs of any on the kitchen floor, nor in the dining room."

"That's true, chief, but those floors may have been swept since the ashes were taken out to the refuse barrel."

"That fails to explain the numerous faint tracks in this room and the side hall," Nick again objected. "Whatever occurred here Tuesday evening Patsy, took place in the house, not outside of it. These ashes did not come from the back yard."

Rising abruptly, Nick returned to the lifeless woman on the couch. Lifting the edges of her gown and skirts, he found on them, as well as on the soles of her low ties, particles of the same gray dust.

"Ah, here we have it," said he, returning the lens to his pocket. "Nell Lackland herself was one of the persons. We'll find out where this ash trail leads. A hundred to one, Patsy, it will take us to the cellar."

Nick was right. He found in the side hall a door leading to the cellar stairs. On each stair, moreover, were numerous tracks of the ashes, far too many to have been left by a single person.

Descending to the cellar, Nick easily found from what part of it the ashes had been tracked. There was a small quantity of them on the cement floor at one side of the furnace, near one of the foundation walls of the house. Other parts of the floor were comparatively clean.

"Gee! here's where they came from, all right," said Patsy. "But why was Nell Lackland down here in the evening? It's only the third of October and much too early for a furnace fire."

"She did not come down here to tend a fire—unless to build one to destroy something," Nick replied, opening the door and looking into the furnace. "There seems, however, to be no evidence of that."

Nick was flashing the beam of his search lamp into the furnace. It was entirely empty, and apparently had not been used since its spring cleaning. The grate was bare, with only a few ashes under it, and no sign of burned papers, documents, nor anything recently destroyed.

In the ashes scattered on the floor near by, nevertheless, marks of various sizes were faintly discernible, convincing Nick that several persons had recently been there, though for what purpose he could not then conjecture.

"Have a look in the air box, chief," suggested Patsy. "That may have been used as a hiding place for something. She may have come down here to get it, or she may have been killed for refusing to reveal the hiding place. Her assailants may then have come down here to search for it."

Nick acted upon the suggestion, but his quest proved vain. The air box was empty, also the air chamber under the furnace. The accumulated dust in both showed plainly that nothing had been hidden in either of them. Nor did a careful inspection of the floor and the near wall reveal any other concealment.

"Gee! it's mighty strange," Patsy declared, at length. "Her ties and skirt show plainly that she was down here Tuesday evening. Others must have been, also, judging from the tracks on the stairs. What do you make of it, chief?"

"Frankly, Patsy, I don't know what to make of it," said Nick. "It's up to us to find out, however, and that perhaps may best be done by seeking other evidence. There is a desk in the library. We'll search it. It may contain letters that will shed light on the mystery."

"Let's hope so. It looks dark enough."

"That drop of blood on the back steps, moreover, indicates that some one was injured," Nick added, as they

returned to the library. "There should, in that case, be other evidence of it. We'll see what more we can find."

A small roll-top desk, open, and in perfect order, occupied one corner of the room. Nick was about to take the chair in front of it, when, glancing at the rug on which it stood, he discovered several red stains, which he hastened to inspect more closely.

They were stains of blood.

"By Jove, I thought we should find them," said he, while Patsy also examined them. "Not only was some one injured, but it also was the one who left by the back door. That single drop of blood on the step fell while he was departing."

"He could not have been very badly wounded, chief, or there would be other stains," said Patsy. "I can find none. These few certainly cut no ice."

"Except as pointers to what occurred here," corrected Nick. "The injury may have been accidental, of course, and not the result of violence. We'll see what the desk has to offer."

Seating himself at it, Nick began to search the pigeonholes and drawers. His endeavors again proved futile. Except a few paid bills, two account books, and some unimportant papers, the desk contained only an ordinary supply of writing materials. There was absolutely nothing that appeared to have any bearing upon the death of Nell Lackland, or the episodes of the previous Tuesday night.

"I've had a look in the kitchen stove," said Patsy, when Nick settled back in his chair after ending his vain search. "It contains the dead coals and cinders from the last fire, but there is no evidence of burned letters or papers. I have been through the upper rooms, also, but there is nothing doing. All of them are in perfect order."

"We must find out by some means, nevertheless, who was here Tuesday evening," Nick said decidedly. "On that may depend the solution of this mystery. If the woman next door is right, a letter was dropped in the box outside yesterday afternoon, nearly twenty-four hours after Nell Lackland's death. What has become of it? Obviously, she could not have removed it. It must have been removed by some one having a key to the box. Unless we can learn—— Stop a bit! Here's a wastebasket under the desk. That may contain something."

It had escaped Nick's notice until then, when he happened to touch it with his foot. Drawing it out, he found it partly filled with torn and crumpled papers, all of them unimportant—with one exception.

Conspicuous among them was a torn, typewritten letter and the envelope in which it had been mailed.

Nick first examined the envelope. It had merely been torn in half and apparently tossed carelessly into the basket. Nick joined the two pieces and saw that it was addressed to Miss Lackland.

The postmark contained the date of mailing, October first—the previous Tuesday.

What chiefly surprised Nick, however, at once adding to the mystery and increasing his misgivings, was the printed return address in the upper left-hand corner: "Daniel Dorrington. Bond Broker. Eccles Building. New York City."

"Great Scott!" Nick exclaimed involuntarily. "What's the meaning of this?"

"What's that, chief?" asked Patsy, approaching.

"This is one of Dan Dorrington's business envelopes. Can he have got into another mess with this woman, or with Violet Hyde?"

"Gee! that don't seem possible," said Patsy. "He has cut out gambling and has been married only three months. Is it addressed to Nell Lackland?"

"Yes, and was posted Tuesday afternoon."

"Gee whiz! Could he have been her visitor that evening?"

"Possibly."

"In that case——"

"Wait!" Nick interrupted, gazing into the wastebasket. "Here are fragments of a torn letter. It is typewritten in the same style as the envelope. Yes, by Jove, and the sheet also bears Dorrington's business card. This may shed a ray of light on the case."

It took Nick only a few moments to match the torn edges of the single sheet, which had been torn in quarters only. The following communication then was easily read:

"NEW YORK, Oct. 1st, 1902.

"MY DEAR MISS LACKLAND: I will make you a final visit this evening and end our discussion of the matter in which we disagree so seriously. It has gone far enough—much too far, in fact. I insist upon receiving a definite answer from you to-night, also the documents I require. Otherwise, I shall not shrink from the step I have threatened to take. Understand me—there can be no middle course. One of us must yield, and—well, you know what that means! Expect me about eight o'clock.

"DANIEL DORRINGTON."

Nick read the letter aloud, while Patsy listened, perplexed and frowning.

"By gracious, that doesn't sound good to me, chief," he declared.

"Nor to me, Patsy, if I were to say what I think," Nick replied. "I cannot fathom it, nevertheless."

"It's worded plainly enough."

"That's very true; but it's not less dark for that reason. I cannot conceive what relations Dan Dorrington, married only three months to as lovely a girl as Betty Vaughn, can have had with this woman. The signature is his, all right, for I have had several letters from him."

"It looks very much as if he was here last Tuesday evening."

"Undoubtedly," Nick admitted. "Yet—stay! There's a telephone in the corner. Call up Dorrington's office and see if you can get him on the wire."

Patsy hastened to do so, but at that very moment—the telephone began to ring.

"Holy smoke! that's a coincidence, for fair," said he, hastening to answer the call. "Hello!"

"Hello!" came over the wire. "Is that your voice, Patsy?"

"Yes. Who are you?"

"Chick."

"The dickens! What's up?"

"Is Nick there?"

"Yes, at my elbow."

"Give him the phone. Are you on, Nick?"

"Yes," said Nick, having taken the instrument.

"I thought I might get you at the Morley place," said Chick. "Mrs. Dorrington has just been talking with me

by phone. You'd better ring up her residence. She wants your advice and aid as soon as possible."

"What's the trouble?"

"Dan Dorrington is mysteriously missing. He hasn't been seen since early Tuesday evening."

CHAPTER IV.

NICK CARTER'S ARTIFICE.

Though surprised and mystified by the disappearance of Dan Dorrington since the night of the suspected murder, Nick Carter did not for a moment believe that he had committed the crime.

He knew that Dan had been wild for a time soon after the death of his father, when he had inherited a fortune of between two and three millions. He knew all about his wild escapades, his passion for gambling, his heavy losses, and how he had been outrageously cheated by a gang of crook gamesters who posed as gentlemen, of whom Martin Morley had secretly been the chief, the director, and backer of their knavish schemes and their legal adviser when in trouble.

Nick also knew in how far Nell Lackland and Violet Hyde, who since had become notorious, had figured in the plot to fleece Dorrington, captivating him with their beauty and artful wiles, only in order to decoy him into the hands of Morley's tricky confederates.

In spite of these unfavorable circumstances and the threatening letter just discovered, indicating that Dorrington had visited Nell Lackland on Tuesday evening, actuated apparently with a somewhat desperate purpose, Nick did not believe that relations had existed between them which had driven Dorrington to taking the woman's life. Who had done so, however, and of what the motive of the crime consisted, Nick could not even vaguely conjecture.

"Great guns! it's certainly a blind case, chief," Patsy perplexedly declared, after a brief discussion of Dorrington's disappearance. "The deeper we go, the darker it gets. We seem to have picked up all of the evidence to be found here. What's the next move?"

Nick already had decided. He had put Dorrington's letter into his pocket, also the envelope in which it had been mailed, and he now took his hat from the table.

"I'm going to have a short talk with Dorrington's wife," he replied. "It will take me only a few minutes, for the residence is in Riverside Drive. In the meantime, Patsy, you telephone to Doctor Gerry, the coroner, and to Captain Carney, of the precinct station. Ask both of them to come here immediately. If they arrive before I return, tell them to wait for me—and to do nothing else. I have a project which I wish to lay before the coroner."

"I understand," said Patsy. "Anything more?"

"Yes. Keep an eye out for the letter carrier, who should show up in this locality about eleven o'clock. Find out what he can tell you about the letter he left here yesterday afternoon, whether name and address were written with a typewriter or with a pen, also, the character of the handwriting, in the latter case, and where the letter was posted. He may recall something about it."

"I'll find out, chief, all right," said Patsy.

"That's all, then, until I return," said Nick, departing.

He hailed Danny upon arriving on the sidewalk, and in a short time his chauffeur dropped him at Dorrington's handsome residence overlooking the Hudson. Nick hastened to the door and rang the bell, and was admitted almost immediately by Betty Dorrington herself, looking exceedingly pale and anxious.

"Oh, Mr. Carter, how good of you to come so quickly," she said gratefully. "I was watching for you. I have telephoned to——"

"I have heard from Chick," Nick interposed, as they entered a beautifully furnished parlor. "I happened to be in this part of the city and he got me by telephone. Your husband is mysteriously missing, I understand."

"Yes, since Tuesday," said Betty, nervous and agitated. "I am in terrible suspense and anxiety. I hardly know what to do, or——"

"For that very reason, Mrs. Dorrington, you must let me act for you," Nick again interrupted. "In the meantime, too, you must not regard your husband's absence so seriously, nor anticipate trouble. He is well able to look out for himself, and I do not believe he is in any personal danger. Answer a few questions for me."

"As many as you wish."

"Have you any idea, or suspicion, as to the cause of his absence?" Nick inquired.

"Not the slightest. I am in total darkness—and despair."

"When did you last see, or hear from him?"

"He dined at home Tuesday evening, and went to the club about half past eight," Betty replied. "He telephoned me an hour later, saying he had an important business matter to straighten out, which had come up unexpectedly, and that he might not return before midnight."

"That is all you have heard?"

"Yes. I did not feel painfully anxious until the following day, yesterday, for business sometimes takes him unexpectedly to Washington. I encouraged myself with a belief that I should hear from him during yesterday, but after waiting until this morning, I no longer could endure my suspense. I decided to call on you for aid and advice."

"You have done wisely, I think," Nick said approvingly. "As I have advised, however, you must overcome your anxiety. He will probably return safely. In any event, I will do all that the case requires."

"I will leave it entirely to you, then," said Betty gratefully.

"Do so," said Nick. "Tell me, now, has he lately appeared nervous, anxious, or unusually self-absorbed?"

"No; neither, Mr. Carter. I have observed nothing unusual."

"Have his habits been regular since he went into business?"

"Very."

"Not been gambling again, of course?"

"No, positively."

"Have you searched his desk for letters that might explain his absence?"

"Every nook and corner of it," Betty earnestly declared. "There is absolutely nothing."

"Have you telephoned to his business office?"

"Repeatedly. He employs only a bookkeeper and a stenographer. Neither can give me any information."

"Has he recently mentioned any of his former associates?"

"For example?"

"Dacey, or Martin Morley, or the latter's niece, Nell Lackland, or Violet Hyde, or——"

"No, not one, Mr. Carter," Betty interposed, with a cringe. "He never even speaks of them. They have, I am sure, passed out of his life forever."

Nick was sure of quite the contrary, but he did not say so. He saw nothing to be gained by immediately disclosing the true state of affairs. He saw, too, that he had learned all that Mrs. Dorrington could impart, and he prolonged his visit only to again assure her that her apprehensions would probably soon be relieved, and that he would take all the steps consistent with the circumstances.

It was eleven o'clock when Nick returned to the scene of the crime. Here he found the coroner, Doctor Gerry, and Captain Carney of the precinct police station awaiting him. He sat down with them in the library, where he informed them as briefly as possible what he had discovered and suspected.

"Now, gentlemen," he impressively added, "I will tell you why I have sent for you on the quiet and what I require. I know, of course, that such a case ordinarily demands general police investigation and immediate publicity. But, with your sanction, Coroner Gerry, both may be temporarily deferred."

"Why deferred, Nick? What can be gained by that?" Doctor Gerry doubtfully questioned.

"I'll tell you," said the detective. "There has been an obvious attempt to give this fatality the appearance of suicide. I want this woman's assassins to think that the coroner is of that opinion; that murder is not suspected, and that no investigations will be made except to discover, if possible, why Nell Lackland killed herself.

"This will tend to relieve her murderers of any personal fear and to throw them off their guard, which will be of great advantage to me in undertaking to identify and run them down."

"I see the point, of course," said the coroner. "But I really feel hardly justified in suppressing the true facts."

"The truth is what justice wants, Doctor Gerry; the truth and the criminals, and the surest way of getting them is that which I wish to adopt," Nick replied. "Success may, in fact, depend upon this artifice. Really, Gerry, you must consent to it."

"But is it feasible, Nick?"

"Feasible—why not?"

"The criminals may suspect it."

"Why?"

"That drop of blood on the back steps. They may fear we will discover it."

"They did not know it was there, Gerry, or they would have obliterated it."

"H'm! there's something in that," Gerry allowed. "But those stains on the rug."

"They are hardly perceptible," said Nick. "It will be inferred that they were overlooked, and murder not even suspected. The same is true of the specks of ashes on the carpet."

"What about Dorrington's letter?"

"The crooks will assume that the wastebasket was not inspected."

"How about the letter left here yesterday?"

"It has been removed, probably by one of the criminals. They will suppose that we know nothing about it."

"Well, well, you meet me at every point," said the coroner. "Still I am averse to suppressing the facts. How long, think you, will it be necessary?"

"I cannot tell," Nick admitted. "I will, of course, get in my work as quickly as possible."

"I fear I am straining my authority," said Gerry, gravely shaking his head. "I would not consider such a proposition, Carter, from any other detective. I'll tell you what I will do."

"Well?"

"I will allow you forty-eight hours before I publish the true facts. In the meantime, there being no relatives, the body may be removed and an autopsy quietly performed, and you may possibly be able to accomplish your object. That is the best I can consent to do."

Nick saw that Gerry meant what he said, and he did not press the matter.

"Very well," he replied. "Give me forty-eight hours, then. Much may be done in two days. We'll let it go at that. I can depend upon you, Captain Carney, to give out the fictitious story?"

"Sure thing, Nick," Carney readily declared. "As a matter of fact, your scheme looks very good to me."

Resulting from this conference, and probably contrary to what any reader uninformed of it would have inferred, the first editions of the afternoon newspapers contained the following story, varied more or less by the information supplied the several reporters:

MISS LACKLAND A SUICIDE.

Miss Eleanor Lackland was found dead in her residence about nine o'clock this morning, where she for several weeks has been living alone. Letters written to friends a few days ago led to a visit by one of them, resulting in a discovery of the fatality. The body was found on a couch in the library. She was clad in a simple evening gown, and an empty vial that had fallen from her hand was convincing evidence of suicide.

Nell Lackland, as she was commonly known, was a niece and only relative of the late Martin Morley, attorney at law, who was convicted, with several members of the now notorious Phil Dacey gang of gamblers and gunmen, of the daring jewel robbery at the time of the Dorrington-Vaughn wedding, in Fordham, about three months ago. Morley committed suicide in Sing Sing one week after his conviction.

Though Nell Lackland was seriously suspected of complicity in the robbery mentioned, she was discharged for lack of positive evidence. She was for a time a familiar figure along the Great White Way, but of late has been living in almost absolute retirement. Depression resulting from the circumstances mentioned is the supposed cause of her suicide. The remains have been removed to Dolan's undertaking rooms for burial on Saturday.

CHAPTER V.

ON A TIME LIMIT.

Nick Carter did not delay his departure after having given Captain Carney and the coroner directions necessary to the artifice he had resolved to adopt. Leaving them to attend to the details, it was half past eleven when he left the house with Patsy, at once entering his touring car and heading for home.

"Forty-eight hours, Patsy," he remarked, as they sped away. "That's a short time in which to solve this mystery and land the crooks."

"Quicker work has been done, chief," replied Patsy. "What man has done, man can do again."

"True."

"I've scored one point. I have seen the letter carrier."

"Good! What did you learn?"

"Very little. Only enough to confirm the neighbors' story. The carrier left the letter yesterday afternoon, all right, but he could recall nothing definite about it, neither whether the address was typewritten, nor where the letter was posted. In fact, he could add nothing to what the neighbor told you."

"Not a long stride forward," said Nick.

"No stride at all, chief," Patsy admitted.

"We'll try in some other direction," Nick added. "I'm going to drop you at Forty-second Street. I want you to find the chauffeur who took Dorrington to Nell Lackland's residence."

"I can do that, all right."

"I hope so. Get all the information you can from the chauffeur, if you can get hold of him, and report as soon as possible."

"Trust me for that."

"In the meantime, I shall see Chick and tell him about the case. You can report to him, if I should be absent."

"I'll deliver the goods, chief, within a couple of hours," said Patsy confidently.

Nick made only one stop on his way home after having dropped Patsy. He called at the residence of Professor Karl Swartz, the eminent German chemist, with whom he left the vial found on the scene of the crime, that he might determine by analysis, if necessary, what it had contained.

"I am unable to say at present," Professor Swartz informed Nick, after sniffing and inspecting the vial. "It is entirely empty, but the cork is quite porous and may contain enough of the ingredient for me to identify it."

"Try it, Karl, at least," said Nick familiarly, they being old friends.

"Surely. I will set about it at once, Nick, and will phone you later."

Nick then went home to lunch, during which he told Chick all about the case and of the subterfuge he had adopted in the hope of speedily identifying and arresting the criminals.

"Forty-eight hours!" Chick exclaimed, after listening attentively. "By Jove, you have bitten off a mouthful, Nick! Can you make good?"

"I can, at least, make a strong try at it," replied the detective.

"You do not suspect Dan Dorrington of the murder?"

"No. I can read character, Chick, and it's not in Dorrington to have killed this woman. If he had done so by accident, or in a frenzy of passion, his first step would have been to call the police and confess his crime. I know the man."

"Nevertheless, if his letter signifies anything, he must have visited Nell Lackland on Tuesday evening."

"I don't entirely credit the letter," said Nick.

"What do you mean?"

"Some one else may have written it and forged Dorrington's signature."

"With a view to involving him in the crime?"

"Exactly."

"But it is written on his office paper."

"That might have been stealthily obtained for the purpose," said Nick; then, more forcibly: "Let's size it up from both standpoints. Dan either did, or did not, write the letter. If he did not, it was devised by some one else, with a view to incriminating him, and he was either lured into going to Nell Lackland's house, or he was trapped elsewhere in some way."

"Elsewhere?"

"There is, aside from this letter, no evidence that he called on Nell Lackland," Nick explained. "He was not seen, so far as we know, and he said nothing to his wife about going there. I'm not at all sure, Chick, that he was there."

"By Jove, it's an open question, Nick, viewing the letter from that standpoint."

"Now, consider it from the other—that he did write it," said Nick. "It indicates that a serious disagreement existed between him and Nell Lackland, that she possessed documents which he was determined to have, and that he already had threatened her, unless she gave them to him. It states that he will visit her Tuesday evening and end the matter—or, he covertly threatens, end her. That's about the size of it."

"I agree with you," said Chick. "That's the most natural interpretation, surely, in view of what has occurred."

"But there are points in connection with this letter, Chick, which don't look right to me."

"Namely?"

"Would Dorrington, if inclined to violence, have committed himself on paper in such terms?"

"H'm! that's a fine point," said Chick. "It does not seem probable."

"Here's another," said Nick. "Having killed the woman, would he not have recalled the letter he had sent her and the threats it contained? Would he not have searched her desk and her wastebasket? Would he have been fool enough to have left it in her house, if he could possibly have found it—and we know very well that he could?"

"By Jove, that also is significant."

"Decidedly so."

"I begin to think you are right."

"Here's still another," Nick added. "Nell Lackland wrote me that she had reformed, and wanted to do right. Her late conduct seems to confirm her statement. I know, Chick, that Dorrington wants to do right. If both are of that mind, then, there could be no disagreement warranting murder, or even violence."

"True again," Chick quickly admitted. "The letter seems more and more like a forgery."

"Now, Chick, here is one more. It's long odds that Dorrington does not know how to use a typewriter. It's reasonable to suppose that he dictated the letter to his stenographer. But would he have done so? Would any sane man, with a knife up his sleeve, figuratively speaking, have dictated such a threatening letter, even to a confidential secretary? Wouldn't it have been the act of a madman, or a lunkhead?"

"It would, Nick, indeed."

"Now, pending reports from Patsy and Professor Swartz, I'm going to Dorrington's office and question his stenographer," said Nick, rising, and replacing the letter in his pocket. "I'll see what she can tell me. You, in the meantime, must tackle another party. I want you to call on her."

"A woman?"

"Yes. Violet Hyde."

"What do you suspect?"

"I know, to begin with, that she feels a bitter enmity for Dorrington, owing to their past relations. We both know of what she is capable, that she would shrink from nothing desperate, or devilish, and she may be back of a job to satisfy her hatred by getting Dorrington into trouble."

"There may be something in that, Nick."

"She has, moreover, maintained her friendly relations with Nell Lackland, on the surface, at least, which would have made it possible, perhaps, for her to involve Dorrington in this way."

"Quite so, surely. It's worth looking into."

"At all events, you see and question her this afternoon," Nick directed. "You can easily find out where she now is living. Visit her in disguise. Pretend to be a reporter and that you are seeking information as to the cause of Nell Lackland's suicide. Be sure you don't hint at murder."

"I'll steer clear of that, Nick, all right," replied Chick, rising.

"You can assert that, knowing her to be an intimate friend of Nell Lackland, you think she may know why she killed herself."

"I understand."

"Find out, if possible, where she was last Tuesday evening, who was with her, and what she was doing," Nick added. "But don't go so far as to seriously arouse her suspicions."

"Trust me," said Chick, as both repaired to Nick's study. "I'll get ready at once, and will see you again at dinner."

"We shall have heard from Patsy and Professor Swartz by that time, and may have picked up a thread worth following," replied Nick, taking his coat and hat. "I'm off now for Dorrington's office."

CHAPTER VI.

A DANGEROUS WOMAN.

Chick Carter, after Nick's departure, did not defer his preparations for a call on Violet Hyde. He took considerable time, nevertheless, in perfecting a disguise sufficiently artistic to preclude recognition.

"She has eyes like a lynx, the jade, and is quick to suspect trickery," he said to himself, while at work at his mirror. "If she really had a hand in this job, as Nick suspects, she may also have heard that he was the one who discovered the body. She may have had some one watching the house. That would make her doubly wary, knowing that Nick is not easily deceived, but quick to devise a crafty move of some kind. She has not forgotten, I'll wager, the last ruse by which we duped her, and landed Morley, Dacey, and every man of their gang. I'll take special care to prevent recognition."

It was after three o'clock when Chick left home. His own mother would not have recognized him. He appeared to be an energetic, intellectual-looking chap in the twenties, wearing a short, pointed beard and gold-bowed glasses.

Heading for the Tenderloin, for he did not know where Violet Hyde then resided, he entered one of the resorts which he knew she frequented, and there obtained the information he wanted. He learned that she was occupying an apartment on the second floor of an East Side tenement near Second Avenue; that she had recently been very friendly with a man named Solomon Perry, and that both had spent part of the previous evening in the resort where he made his inquiries. Neither of them, however, he incidentally learned, had been seen there the previous Tuesday night.

"Friendly with Sol Perry, is she?" thought Chick, upon emerging to the street. "Birds of a feather. Blackbirds, too, of the blackest kind. Perry used to deal the bank for Dacey before we closed his gambling joint, and was said to be too slick for the old rounders to go up against. His cleverness may not be confined to a deck of cards and a brace deal box. Nick may, more likely than not, have hit the nail on the head."

Twenty minutes later, or soon after four o'clock, Chick approached the tenement to which he had been directed, surveying it from the opposite side of the street. It was in an inferior building, the ground floor of which was occupied by a café, patronized chiefly by wage earners and fellows of the lower classes and shady reputation. The entrance was from the side street, back of the café, and the locality was one of the most unsavory in that particular section of the East Side.

Chick sauntered by on the opposite side of the street and gazed furtively up at the windows on the second floor. Flimsy lace curtains, as soiled as the dusty panes, evinced an attempt at gentility, but the general appearance was far from inviting.

"Lower and lower," thought Chick. "A steady tread of the downward path. It's not so long since Violet Hyde would have gone into the air like a rocket, if any one had hinted that she would have come to this. It used to be Irish lace and damask velvet for her furnishings."

Chick could see no sign of any one at the windows. He walked on as far as the corner, then crossed over, and approached the door of the tenement. He saw the push buttons on the casing, but he also saw the door was ajar, and he stepped into a narrow hall at the foot of a flight of stairs. To his left was another door, evidently leading into the barroom.

There was no carpet on the stairs. Chick mounted them quietly, pausing on the second-floor landing near a door entering into the flat. He waited and listened, and incidentally his gaze fell upon a hemp mat near the door.

Some grayish flecks caught his eye. They did not look like dust brought in from the street. He crouched to examine them, and found—a few specks of ashes and some fine cinders, such as might have adhered to the edges of a person's soles, if he had stepped into an ash heap.

"By Jove, our net may catch the fish!" he murmured. "These ashes may have come from Nell Lackland's cellar. In that case, it's dollars to fried rings that——"

Chick's mind digressed abruptly.

Through the closed door near which he was crouching, he faintly heard the ringing of a bell. It evidently was from a room somewhat removed from the door, or was muffled by a closed door within, but there was no mistaking the sound.

"A telephone," thought Chick. "By Jove, if the jade is absent, I might intercept a communication that would explain the whole business, providing I can get in there in time."

He was feeling for a ring of keys, but the project was knocked on the head by another sound—the quick fall of feet on a bare floor. Chick listened intently, but the telephone did not ring again, and he knew that the first call was being answered.

He could not hear the voice of the speaker, however, nor determine from what part of the tenement the sounds had come.

"The minx evidently is at home," he said to himself. "I'll wait until she ends the interview, then I'll see what she has to say for herself."

He waited several minutes, hearing no sound from within, and little dreaming what the delay was to cost him. Then, rising from the hemp mat, he knocked on the door. Nearly a minute passed before it was opened, and the woman he was seeking appeared on the threshold.

Violet Hyde carried signs of dissipation and her rapid downward career. She had lost most of her beauty. Her face was haggard, her eyes darkly ringed, her cheeks sallow, barring a glow of rouge carelessly applied. She wore a loose woolen house dress, a sort of wrapper, which served to hide the unattractive outlines of her once plump and graceful figure.

Chick gazed at her for a moment, betraying no signs of recognition, while he said politely, lifting his hat:

"I am looking for Miss Violet Hyde."

"Well, you needn't look farther," replied Violet. "She's right here."

"Ah, I'm glad to find you," said Chick, tendering a card with which he had provided himself. "Allow me. My name is Fogarty—Daniel Fogarty. I am a reporter for the associated press. Can you conveniently give me a brief interview?"

"Interview, eh?" queried Violet tersely. "What about?"

"I will presently explain. If I might come in, Miss Hyde——"

"Sure you can come in," Violet interrupted inellegantly. "There is no string on you. Walk into my parlor, That's what the spider said to the fly, but you'll not mind that," she added, laughing a bit coarsely.

Chick laughed also, but wondered whether she had any covert meaning. He felt sure that she could not have recognized him, though he knew she hated him as the devil hates holy water. He followed her into a cheaply furnished front room, taking a chair, and placing his hat on a center table.

"I hope I don't intrude. Were you engaged?" he inquired, bent upon learning whether he found her alone.

"Only basting in a sleeve-protector," she replied, pointing to a wickerwork basket and a frayed silk waist on the table. She seated herself at one side of it, directly opposite the detective, adding pointedly: "It's too early in the day for me to get busy."

"I thought perhaps you might have company."

"No, not till you showed up. What's it about, anyway?"

"The interview?"

"Sure. What else? That's what you came for, isn't it?" demanded Violet, steadily eying him.

"Yes, certainly," said Chick, producing a notebook and pencil. "It's about a friend of yours. That is to say, I was told that you were very friendly. That's why I hope to obtain from you the information I am seeking. I refer to Miss Lackland."

"Nell Lackland?"

"The same."

"Yes, we were pretty good friends."

"Have you heard anything about her to-day?"

"Oh, you needn't be mealy-mouthed," said Violet, with a contemptuous shrug. "Speak right out in meeting. I'm not the kind that is easily shocked."

"You know about her, then?"

"I know what the newspapers state. I see that she has croaked herself, the poor fool. I suppose that's what you have come to ask about. That didn't surprise me. I've been looking for it."

"Ah!" said Chick, with manifest satisfaction. "Perhaps, then, you can tell me why she did it."

"Is that what you have come here to learn?" questioned Violet, with brows knitting. "Is that why, or are you after something else?"

"Nothing else," said Chick promptly. "I want only to learn, if possible, the cause of the suicide. The public is always looking for the whole truth in such cases."

"The public had better mind its own business," Violet curtly retorted. "You reporters, too, are always butting into people's private affairs. You're worse than the seven years' itch. But I can tell you why she did it. And I will tell you, too—on one condition."

"What is it?"

"That you will print what I tell you."

"I'll do that, all right," Chick quickly agreed. "I thought you might be able to inform me. Tell me—why did she do it?"

"She was driven to it."

"Driven to it?"

"Yes—driven to it."

"By what, or whom?"

"By two fly guns," said Violet, with bitter asperity. "Two fly guns by the name of Carter."

"Do you mean Nick and Chick Carter?"

"That's what. They were the two. You close your trap for half a minute, Mr. Fogarty, and I'll tell you why she did it."

An ugly gleam appeared in the woman's eyes. She leaned nearer the table, so near that her breast touched it, and her hands fell below the edge of it. She gazed across it at Chick, adding, with intense bitterness:

"She did it because these Carters drove her to it. They made a mark of her uncle, Mart Morley, and got him for a robbery in Fordham. He killed himself in prison. They framed up Phil Dacey, one of her best friends, for keeping a gambling joint. What was it to them if he did, the infernal meddlers? He's doing time in Sing Sing. They put a dozen of her best friends behind bolts and bars. They rung her into the Fordham job, and me along with her, and had us tried for the crime. Wasn't that enough to ruin our reputations? Huh! I should say so. But we beat them, the devil take them, and some day I'll get even with both."

"That's why Nell Lackland killed herself, eh?" queried Chick, not believing a word of it.

"Yes, that's why she did it," Violet bitterly insisted. "All this preyed on her mind and got on her nerves. It queered her in the upper story. She got down in the mouth. She thought she had nothing to live for, the fool, so she croaked herself. That's why she did it—and 'twas all because of those Carters."

"I don't quite see how you can lay it to them," said Chick tentatively.

"You don't?" sneered Violet derisively. "Well, I do! I've got better eyes, mebbe, than you have. The Carters were responsible for it. They have put it across the best pal I ever had, this same Nell Lackland, and sooner or later I'll get them for it. I'll even up things and avenge her death. You can bet on that, Mr. Fogarty."

"Avenge it how?" inquired Chick.

"With their lives. I'll take what they have taken. I'll croak both of them to pay for it."

"Croak Nick Carter?"

"Yes."

"And Chick Carter?"

"Both."

"It strikes me, Miss Hyde, that you are tackling quite a tough job," said Chick dryly. "When, if I may ask without appearing too inquisitive, is that sanguinary trick to be turned?"

Violet Hyde gazed at him for a moment without stirring, then said, with sinister levity:

"Oh, I don't mind your being inquisitive, Mr. Fogarty. I rather like it. It won't be very long before I shall start in—not very long."

Chick laughed incredulously.

"You seem to doubt that, also, Mr. Forgarty."

"Well, frankly, I do."

"Is that so?"

"The Carters are not so easily croaked," said Chick, bent upon leading her on. "Bold men have attempted that—and failed."

"One vengeful woman, then, will show them the way. I'll get them—let me alone to get them! You doubt that, too, I see."

"I certainly do."

"I'll convince you, then, by getting one of them right off the reel," cried Violet, sneering. "You sit still, now, and keep your hands in plain sight—or you'll need the attentions of an undertaker. It'll be you for the discard."

She straightened up while speaking, and her hands rose above the edge of the table.

One of them held a revolver—aimed straight at Chick's breast.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ACME OF KNAVERY.

Though surprised, Chick Carter did not betray it. He realized at once that he had been recognized, despite his precautions, and momentary chagrin was mingled with his surprise. Wondering at the discernment of this vicious woman, and whether she was merely suspicious, and taking a random shot to confirm her misgivings, he gazed across the table at her, and coolly inquired:

"Is this a joke? What are you going to do with that toy, Miss Hyde?"

"You'll find it's no joke," Violet retorted. "You move foot or finger, Chick Carter, and this toy will do the talking."

"Ah! you know me, then?"

"Know you—bah!" Violet ejaculated contemptuously. "I knew you the moment I saw you. You heard me invite you into my parlor, didn't you? Your fate will be that of the fly."

"Is that so?" Chick now said, more sternly. "Permit me to state, at least, that I doubt that, also."

"You do, eh?" Violet sneered, keeping him constantly covered. "Wait and see. Come in here, Sol. Come in at once and lend me a hand. Move lively—but don't get between him and this gun. You might stop a bullet."

Watching her sharply, Chick saw plainly enough that she meant what she said; that the slightest aggressive move on his part would invite a bullet. No sane man would have ignored the look in her evil eyes.

In response to her sharp commands, a wiry, dark-featured man in the thirties darted into the room from one adjoining it. Chick knew him, the Solomon Perry already mentioned. He carried several pieces of tarred marline in his hand, and he lost no time in making use of them.

"I've got him, Violet," he cried, hastening back of Chick's chair. "Keep him covered. I'll do the rest. Hands behind you, Carter, and be quick about it."

Chick made no resistance, nor uttered any protest. He knew that neither would avail him anything. He suffered Perry to draw his hands behind him and securely bind them, after which the rascal removed Chick's revolvers and transferred them to his own pockets. Then, having quickly bound the detective's ankles, also, Perry started up, exclaiming darkly:

"There, blast you! That'll hold you for a time. Come out of this disguise," he added, snatching the glasses and beard from Chick's face. "What job are you Carters framing up on us this time? Isn't it enough that you——"

"Shut up, Sol!" Violet Hyde sharply interrupted. "Let me do the talking. I'm running this funeral."

"You are, eh?"

"You'll find I am," snapped the woman. "Draw the curtains and light the gas. It'll be dark here in ten minutes—but not as dark as the hole this infernal meddler is booked to fill. Do what I tell you."

Perry obeyed her, frowning, but in evident fear of her. With half an eye, Chick could see that the devil in her was let loose, and he knew what that meant.

She waited until the curtains were lowered and the gas lighted; then she turned quickly to Chick again and demanded, with vicious asperity:

"Well, what do you think now?"

"You wouldn't like to hear it," Chick dryly answered.

"I'd like it better than you'll like what I soon will say to you," retorted Violet. "I've removed some of your doubts, I reckon. I've got you, for a starter, and I'll soon get Nick Carter and that mongrel named Garvan. I've got it in for one and all of you. Send my pals to Sing Sing, will you?"

"I'll send you to a worse place sooner or later," said Chick sternly.

"Rats!"

"You heard me."

"And laugh at you," Violet cried defiantly. "You're in wrong this time. I've got you where I want you, where I've prayed that I might get you. I never prayed until I began to hate you Carters, and now one of my prayers is answered."

"The devil to whom you must address them always fails his servants sooner or later," said Chick. "You'll get yours, all right."

"I've got you, at all events, and will end you——"

"Say!" Perry interrupted, breaking in impatiently. "How long is this to continue?"

"As long as I like," said Violet snappishly.

"Do you think there's nothing else to be done, hang you, after——"

"After the trick Nick Carter has tried to put across us," Violet cut in derisively. "Oh, let that fool hear me," she fiercely added, when Perry's face took on a disapproving scowl. "He'll not live to use it. Take my word for that."

"But——"

"Oh, well, since you're on nettles, then, we'll end it, and be off," Violet now interrupted, starting to her feet. "Lend a hand, and we'll lock him in the dining-room closet. He'll be safe enough there—safe enough, on my word!"

"Why in the closet?" questioned Perry. "Why——"

"Because I say so! Be quick about it, too!"

Perry yielded again, but his face reflected the same ominous misgivings that were in Chick's mind. Obviously, however, he was under this woman's thumb, and her hatred of Chick had turned her into a demon, with a greed for evil that scarce knew bounds. Together they seized Chick and bore him into an adjoining room, where they placed him on the floor of a closet, on the shelved walls of which was a quantity of china and glassware.

"Bring a towel," Violet commanded. "Bring a towel, Sol, and bind it over his mouth. I never want to hear him speak again."

Perry hastened to obey, evidently anxious to leave the house, and Chick saw nothing in bantering words with the vengeful woman. He suffered Perry to gag him, after which Violet Hyde closed and locked the closet door, leaving Chick in inky darkness.

"By Jove, this looks a bit rocky," he said to himself. "Nick is right in one of his theories, at least, but I've fallen in wrong for fair. I'd give something to know how that jade identified me so quickly. She could not, I'll swear, have seen through my disguise. She must have received a tip from some one, yet my designs were known only to Nick and myself.

"He went to question Dorrington's stenographer—oh, by Jove, I have it! Dorrington's letter, his stenographer, the telephone call just now—as sure as I'm a foot high, Dorrington's stenographer is a crook and in with the gang that killed Nell Lackland. Nick has got in his work and been fooled temporarily, at least, and the stenographer phoned these two rascals about his visit and his inquiries. That's why Violet Hyde suspected and recognized me, and why the devil in her is up in arms."

Turning on the floor until his head was close to the door, Chick listened intently. He could hear the footsteps of the couple, and occasionally their voices, but was unable to distinguish what was said. They appeared to be discussing something, however, and only after nearly an hour had passed did Chick hear anything distinctly.

Then, Violet Hyde's voice, shrill with vicious determination, a deviltry that would not brook opposition, plainly reached his ears.

"You go on and wait for me on the stairs," she cried. "This is my funeral, Sol, not yours. I'll have my way and pay that rat with his own coin, or I'll not go near Bug Moran's crib this night. The money may go to the devil. Revenge is sweeter to me than the dough. You go out and wait on the stairs. I'll not keep you half a minute."

"By Jove, there's going to be something doing, despite the delay," thought Chick. "Am I to get mine right here?"

He was not left long in doubt. The last thought scarce had crossed his mind when he heard Violet Hyde's approaching steps. Then the closet door was opened and she appeared on the threshold.

She had changed her dress and was in street attire. Her sallow face, looking doubly white and pasty under the terrible design that inspired her, wore an expression that sent a chill down the detective's spine. She stepped into the closet, saying fiercely between her teeth:

"Get me, will you? Run down my pals, will you, and send them to Sing Sing? Damn you, I'll fix you for it! Here's where you get yours. I'll send you to the devil, if I go the same way within the week. Think of Nostrand, Morley, Dacey, and the rest of my pals, while you're waiting for death. You got them, but I've got you! Here's where you'll pay the price. This will avenge them. I kept it for vermin—and that's you! Now, Chick Carter, go to the devil!"

She had, while speaking, hurriedly lighted the wick of a square, yellow object, which she had quickly placed in a dish on the highest shelf in the closet, utterly out of reach by the bound detective. Then, with a last look of inhuman triumph, she kicked Chick contemptuously, then closed and locked the door.

Chick heard her receding steps when she darted away, also the bang of the outer door when she departed.

The closet no longer was in darkness. A tiny flame high up on the top shelf cast a sickly glow around his close confines.

More sickly, far more, were the fumes that almost instantly reached Chick's nostrils, chilling his blood for a moment.

"Good God!" he mentally exclaimed. "She has lighted a sulphur candle. What a devil incarnate! I must get out of here in short order, or—well, I shall be finally carried out!"

Chick knew that he had not an instant to waste. He saw at a glance that he could by no means, while his feet were bound and his arms secured behind him, reach the candle to extinguish it. To free himself by breaking one of the dishes and cutting his cords against the edge of it, which for an instant appealed to him, was utterly impossible in the brief time in which it had to be done.

Chick took, therefore, the only method that appealed to him with any promise of success. Lying flat on his back, he bent his bound legs and began a fierce attack on one of the lower panels of the closed door.

Kick after kick, bang after bang, followed in quick succession, but the door did not yield.

Gazing up, he could see the filmy veil of smoke that was spreading over the ceiling and fast working lower and lower. Within a half a minute the first choking fumes reached him, and he was seized with a fit of coughing.

"Heavens! has she got me? Has she really got me?" he asked himself. "I'll be hanged if I can believe that."

He turned his face nearer the floor for an instant, where the air still was clear. He inhaled one long breath—and held it!

And then, with redoubled energy, with all the strength of utter desperation, with death and the tortures of strangulation staring him in the face, he renewed his vain attack upon the door.

CHAPTER VIII.

CONFLICTING CLEWS.

It was three o'clock when Nick Carter entered the business quarters of Mr. Daniel Dorrington, two handsomely appointed rooms on the second floor of an office building in Broad Street. The only occupant was a tall, willowy girl with auburn hair, a sallow complexion, and gray, somewhat shifty eyes. She had an agreeable smile, however, and greeted Nick pleasantly, laying aside a letter she had just typewritten.

"Good afternoon, sir," she said, bowing.

"Don't rise," replied Nick, approaching the typewriter stand at which she was seated. "You are Mr. Dorrington's stenographer, I judge."

"Yes, sir."

"Is he about?"

"Mr. Dorrington is away, sir."

"The bookkeeper?"

"He has just gone for the day We are not very busy sir, during Mr. Dorrington's absence. Did you wish to see him? Is there anything I can do?"

Nick took a chair near the stand on which the girl had laid the typewritten letter. He detected at a glance several slight peculiarities in the type and alignment, corresponding with those noted in the letter then in his pocket. They convinced him that the letter had been written on the machine the girl then was using.

"Yes, there is something you can do for me," he replied. "What, by the way, is your name?"

"Celia Dillon, sir," said she, coloring slightly and regarding him more sharply.

"Pardon me for appearing inquisitive, Miss Dillon, but I will now explain," said Nick. "Mrs. Dorrington is very anxious concerning her husband's mysterious absence. She has employed me to look into the matter. My name is Carter. I am a detective, and one of Dorrington's personal friends."

"Ah!" said Miss Dillon. "I am very pleased to know you, Mr. Carter, and am glad that Mrs. Dorrington has employed you. We, too, are very anxious. I refer to Mr. Chase, the bookkeeper, and myself."

"No doubt," said Nick. "You will do what you can to assist me?"

"Yes, indeed! Surely!" cried Celia eagerly.

"I suppose, too, that I can trust you to disclose nothing that I may confide to you?"

"Trust me—well, I should say so" Celia exclaimed. "Really, Mr. Carter, I would do anything in the world for Mr. Dorrington. He would tell you I am perfectly trustworthy. You may safely confide in me to any extent."

Her immediate compliance, her impulsive declarations, the eagerness lighting her narrow, gray eyes, all seemed entirely consistent with the sentiments she expressed, and the anxiety she naturally should have felt. Any other attitude would, in fact, have been more likely to have aroused the detective's suspicions.

"Very good," Nick replied. "There are serious reasons why you must not say anything about my inquiries, or about this visit."

"I will not mention them, Mr. Carter, not to a living soul," Celia earnestly assured him. "No one has anything on me, sir, when it comes to keeping a secret. I'm dumb, Mr. Carter, after you leave this office."

"Very good," Nick repeated. "I want to ask you about a letter bearing Mr. Dorrington's signature. Here it is, Miss Dillon. Can you tell me anything about it?"

Celia Dillon read only a few lines of the torn letter, which the detective had drawn from his pocket while speaking. She looked up at him quickly, replying, without a change of countenance:

"What about it, Mr. Carter? What can I tell you?"

"You have seen it before?"

"Certainly," Celia cried, gazing at him. "Let me see—I think it was last Tuesday. What is the date—yes, I am right. It was sent on Tuesday. I mailed it when I went out to lunch."

"Did you typewrite it?"

"Certainly."

"And Mr. Dorrington dictated it to you?"

"Why, yes, of course. I'll show you the notes in my shorthand book, if you would like to see them."

"That is not necessary," said Nick, detecting no sign of duplicity in the girl. "Your word is sufficient. Do you know the woman to whom the letter is addressed?"

"No, sir."

"Have you ever seen her?"

"Neither seen nor heard of her," said Celia, shaking her head.

"Did Mr. Dorrington say anything about her while dictating the letter?"

"He did not I took his dictation in his private office, and later gave him the typewritten letter to sign. He signed it and told me to be sure to mail it when I went out. Really, Mr. Carter, that is all I can tell you about it."

"Did Mr. Dorrington appear nervous, or in any way disturbed, when dictating the letter?" Nick inquired.

"Well, not seriously," said Celia, pausing to think. "He did appear a little irritable I don't know, Mr. Carter, as that is just the word I should use Not irritable toward me, you understand, but he spoke in much more severe and determined tones than usual. That is all, sir."

"Did you see any letter from Miss Lackland, to which this was a reply?"

"I did not. I don't think he was replying to a lette from her, for in such cases he always has the letter in his hand or on his desk, for reference."

"I see," said Nick. "What did you think of this letter, Miss Dillon? Did it make any impression on you?"

"Why, no, not that I recall. I supposed it referred to some business matter that annoyed Mr. Dorrington. I posted the letter, as he directed, and since have thought nothing about it."

"Mrs. Dorrington telephoned here to inquire about his absence," said Nick, gazing at the girl a bit more sharply. "Did you know it?"

"Yes. sir, certainly," Celia replied. "I talked with her."

"Why didn't you mention this letter and the appointment he made for Tuesday evening. when, so far as is known, he was last seen?"

Miss Dillon did not resent the possible implication, but said quickly, with added earnestness:

"Really, Mr. Carter, I did not even think of the letter. If I had, sir, I should surely have done so, though I don't know how it has any bearing upon his prolonged absence. Mr. Dorrington is above doing anything wrong, or underhand."

"That is very true," Nick said, rising to go. "I think he will soon return and explain his absence."

"Yes, sir; so do I." Celia declared. "I feel, in fact, quite sure of it."

Nick did not prolong his interview, then assuming that the girl had given him all the information she could impart. He lingered only to again caution her against disclosing his visit, then thanked her, and departed.

Celia Dillon watched him, bowing and smiling, until the office door had closed upon his imposing figure. She listened for a moment to his receding steps. Her smile vanished. The tinge of color in her cheeks faded to sallow ghastliness. Her brows drooped until they met with an ugly frown over her shifty gray eyes.

Then she suddenly arose, stole to the door, and listened until sure the detective had really departed, and then she turned and darted—to a telephone on Dorrington's desk.

She called up Violet Hyde—and it was her communication that led the latter to recognize Chick Carter and suspect his true mission, five minutes later.

Nick Carter's strong, clean-cut face wore a look of grim perplexity when he returned home at five o'clock that afternoon. He had hoped to find that Daniel Dorrington was not the writer of the threatening letter to Nell Lackland, but there now seemed to be no reasonable doubt of it.

"What's the true meaning of it?" Nick asked himself, while returning home. "Why, if he contemplated violence, did he write her such a letter? What relations can have existed between them? To what documents did he refer? By Jove, I can hardly believe, even now, that he wrote it, or, if he did, that he was in his right mind."

The problem was a baffling one, indeed, and with every step Nick Carter took, it became more obscure. Adding to his perplexity, moreover, and apparently crumbling the foundation of every theory that he had formed, came further disclosures.

It was five o'clock when he entered his private study, and he found on his desk two telephone communications that had been received by Joseph.

One was from Professor Swartz, stating that the vial found on the scene of the crime had contained—chloral.

"Chloral!" Nick muttered, dropping the pad on which Joseph had written the message. "Knock-out drops! What earthly use, or unearthly, could Dorrington have had for that stuff? Did he undertake to stupefy Nell Lackland, in order to search her house, and unintentionally kill her? That might have been, yet even that seems improbable. I cannot believe that I am all wrong in my estimate of this man and of this case. H'm! here's another."

Nick picked up a sheet on which Joseph had written a longer communication from Doctor Gerry, the coroner. It read as follows:

"An autopsy performed this afternoon on the remains of Nell Lackland revealed the presence of a quantity of chloral in the stomach. The conditions of the lungs, however, prove conclusively that death resulted from suffocation. It is my opinion, also of my two associates, that she was rendered unconscious by a dose of chloral, perhaps covertly administered, and that she was afterward smothered."

Nick Carter read this message twice, then replaced it on his desk.

"Knocked out with chloral, and then smothered," he said to himself. "That's why there was no struggle, no evidence of violence. A dastardly crime, indeed! Can it be that Dorrington was there, and that——"

Nick's train of thought was broken at that moment by the hurried entrance of Patsy Garvan, and any lingering doubt of Dorrington's presence in Nell Lackland's residence the previous Tuesday evening was dispelled from Nick's mind by the report immediately made by his assistant.

"Ah, you're here, chief!" Patsy cried, upon entering. "I've found the chauffeur who took Dorrington to Nell Lackland's house."

"You have, eh?" said Nick, gazing at him. "Who is the man?"

"His name is Jack Moody. He drives for Henderson & Blair's garage, where Dorrington has a running account. He phoned for the taxi from his club about eight o'clock that night, and Moody was sent there. He took Dorrington to Miss Lackland's house and was directed to wait, which he did for more than an hour. Dorrington then came to the door of the house and dismissed him, saying that he might remain indefinitely, and Moody returned to the garage. That's all the information he could give me."

"He is sure, of course, that the man was Dorrington?"

"Positively," said Patsy. "I asked him that question."

"And that it was Dorrington who dismissed him?"

"He said he was sure of that, also, but he admitted that he did not distinctly see the man who came to the door, it being dark in the front hall."

"Ah! he may, then, have been mistaken," said Nick, seizing upon any encouraging thread.

"But the voice was Dorrington's, chief, as near as Moody could tell. He had no doubt of it."

"Voices may be cleverly imitated. Did you ask him whether he heard any disturbance in the house?"

"Sure thing, chief," said Patsy. "He heard nothing, nor did he see any visitors come or go. He suspected nothing, chief, and told me a straight story. I think he's on the level."

"Probably," Nick said gravely. "I seem to be running against a brick wall, Patsy, whichever way I turn. Chick still is absent. He may have discovered something. I sent him to question Violet Hyde."

"Gee! that's not so bad," said Patsy. "It might be, since she was so friendly with Nell Lackland, that this whole business is the result of some kind of a frame-up. She'd knife her best friend, if there was anything in it. I've heard, too, that she is nearly down and out financially."

"Down and out in every way—that's about to be her fate," Nick replied, then turned to his desk.

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE RIGHT TRACK.

The sentiments and suspicions expressed by Patsy Garvan were precisely in line with those which had occasioned the step Nick had taken, and he made no comment upon them. Still frowning perplexedly, he sat down in his desk chair to further consider the case. Switching on the electric desk lamp, he took from a pigeonhole the letter he had received from Nell Lackland, then drew from his pocket the torn Dorrington letter and the envelope in which it had been mailed.

Nick intended only to compare them, to see whether

he thus could detect anything of undiscovered significance—but he did not do even that.

As he laid the torn envelope on his desk, the bright glare from the near lamp fell upon the face of it, and at such an angle that it revealed to his quick eyes one small spot not as glossy as the rest of the surface. It looked as if a rubber eraser had been carefully used.

This spot was in the post mark, and like a flash Nick Carter's racked mind, concentrated for hours upon the mystery, grasped anew every detail of the case and the full significance of his unexpected discovery.

He said nothing about it until absolutely sure of it. Taking a powerful microscope from a drawer, he examined the telltale spot through the lens.

The erasure, hardly perceptible to the naked eye, then was perfectly plain. Not only the erasure, in fact, but also the careful touches of India ink with which—the date of the post mark had been altered.

Nick was accustomed to making startling discoveries. Though he felt a thrill of satisfaction, he betrayed no excitement. He looked up quickly, however, and cried:

"Come here, Patsy! I've got it."

"Got it?" echoed Patsy, hurriedly approaching. "Got what, chief?"

"The key to the mystery."

"The deuce you say!"

"I've made one of those discoveries, Patsy, which come to all men who concentrate their best mental powers upon the solution of a problem. This post mark has been changed. See for yourself. Hold it nearer the light and use my lens."

"By thunder, chief, you're right," cried Patsy, after complying. "A rubber eraser has been lightly used. The lens reveals a shady outline of the original date. A figure two has been erased and a figure one substituted for it."

"Exactly," said Nick. "That's precisely what I detected. Do you grasp all it signifies?"

"You say."

"It may be quickly told. Nell Lackland was murdered on the first of the month. The crime was discovered on the third. This is the letter the carrier left in her box on the second, and which afterward was stolen. It's a forgery. Dorrington did not write it."

"But——"

"Stop a bit," Nick interrupted. "This case looks entirely different. Dorrington did go to Nell Lackland's house Tuesday evening. He probably called at her request, but he did not send this letter. She mentions in her letter to me a wish to right a wrong. It must have been a wrong done Dorrington, and failing to get my assistance, she must have appealed directly to him. Whatever the wrong was—by Jove, I think I have it!"

"What do you suspect?" Patsy inquired eagerly.

"Dorrington lost a large sum of money to Morley and his confederates when he was gambling, something over a hundred thousand dollars. Morley was the chief of the gang and he had the handling of the coin. It may not have been divided before Morley was caught for the Fordham robbery. It may have been concealed in his cellar, and Nell Lackland probably knew of it. She may have confided the fact to Violet Hyde, but not the hiding-place, and also an intention to refund the money to Dorrington."

"By Jove, that sounds right to me," declared Patsy.

"If it is right," Nick rapidly reasoned, "we can certainly bank on other consistent points."

"Namely?"

"Some of the gang, including Violet Hyde, were watching her to prevent the return of the money. She wrote me she feared she was being watched, you remember, and that her life was in danger. She must have been threatened, then, for refusing to reveal the hiding-place."

"You think it was in the cellar?"

"Surely. As I now reconstruct the affair, she went down there Tuesday evening to get the money, knowing Dorrington was to call, and that explains why we found ashes on her ties and skirts. The hiding-place was near the furnace, despite we could not discover it."

"You think, too, that some of the gang were in the house when Dorrington called?"

"That's precisely how I now size it up," Nick said decidedly. "Violet Hyde could easily have duped her old friend to some extent, if unable to persuade her to reveal where the money was concealed."

"There is evidence enough that some of the gang were there," said Patsy.

"Certainly. I now think Violet Hyde was the first to arrive. I think she contrived in some way to give knock-out drops to Nell Lackland, that she might afterward admit the gang to search the house. I think that Nell was afterward smothered, possibly by accident, and that that was the situation when Dorrington put in an appearance. What followed is an open question. I now am convinced, however, that Dorrington was overcome and abducted. That's why he is missing."

"The scheme being to fix the murder upon him?" said Patsy.

"Exactly. Furthermore, I now feel sure that the gang got away with the money."

"What convinced you of that?"

"Their footprints in the cellar indicate that they suspected the location of the hiding-place. They may have discovered the ashes on Nell Lackland's ties. Or, if she had removed the money, they afterward found it. I'm sure of that, Patsy, because they afterward went so far as to ring Dorrington's stenographer into the crime, in order to get her to print this letter and forge his signature. That is, of course, unless she already was in the game."

"By Jove, chief, you're shooting close to the mark now, I reckon," Patsy declared, quick to see all of the points Nick had brought out.

"I think so, too," Nick said modestly. "This letter was faked and mailed, you see, on the day following the murder. One of the gang must have removed it from the letter box on Wednesday night. After changing the post mark to the previous day, both the letter and envelope were torn, and left in Nell Lackland's wastebasket, the rascals knowing that they would surely be found after the body was discovered, and that murder would then be suspected, also that Dorrington committed the crime and fled."

"But why, in that case, chief, did they fake evidence indicating suicide?" questioned Patsy.

"That's a step an assassin as clever as Dorrington might have taken," Nick explained. "If the death was attributed to suicide, he could return and plausibly explain his absence. If the murder was discovered, on the contrary, his whereabouts would be unknown, and he might never

be traced. That's how the crooks reasoned, and they foresaw that the police would do likewise."

"I see the point."

"Take it from me, Patsy, Dorrington was knocked out and removed by this gang. It was his blood that we found on the rug and on the back step."

"By Jove! This, then, is a horse of another color."

"Right! We'll proceed to put a halter on him, too, without further delay," declared Nick, abruptly rising. "Forty-eight hours, eh? Unless I'm much mistaken, Patsy, I'll give Gerry a surprise by landing this gang in half the time allowed me."

"Gee! that's the stuff," cried Patsy. "What's the next move?"

"You get after Celia Dillon," Nick quickly directed. "Find out where she lives. Go to her home and arrest her, or wherever you find her. If she is in company with any persons warranting suspicion, arrest them also, and have them held for examination."

"I'll do that, all right," declared Patsy, hastening to make ready. "But what have you in view, chief?"

Nick had rung for his chauffeur and touring car, and was slipping a brace of revolvers into his hip pockets.

"Chick has not returned," said he, with an ominous light in his eyes. "If I'm right, Patsy, and I now am willing to bank on it, Celia Dillon lost no time in notifying her confederates of my visit."

"Gee! I guess that's a safe gamble, chief."

"And if her confederates include Violet Hyde, that she-cat would have instantly suspected my subterfuge, and—well, that may explain Chick's long absence! I'm out now to get Violet Hyde."

It was about six o'clock when they left the house, Patsy to hurry away and hail a taxicab, while Nick entered his touring car and gave Danny his directions.

He was not long in learning where Violet Hyde resided, nor was he long in arriving in that locality. Leaving Danny nearly a block away to wait with the car, Nick put on a simple disguise and proceeded on foot toward the tenement, approaching it through the side street from which it was entered.

Daylight long since had given place to darkness—or as near that as ever shrouds the streets of New York. There are byways, courts, and streets, however, where a near approach to darkness prevails, and the street through which Nick was now rapidly walking was one of them.

Nick still was fifty yards from Second Avenue, toward which he was gazing, when two figures suddenly appeared upon the sidewalk some distance away, those of a man and a woman. They were quite plainly visible in the light from the avenue, and Nick instantly hit upon the truth.

"The woman herself!" he muttered. "I may be in the nick of time. She has just left her tenement and is bound off with——"

Nick ended his train of thought. He saw the couple turn to come toward him. He stepped into the dark doorway of a tenement house, and was thinking whether he would arrest them then and there, when he heard their approaching steps and the voice of Violet Hyde.

"Never you mind what I've done. Five minutes will settle his hash, Sol, and that ought to be good enough for you. No more kicking over it; I'll not stand for it. We'll hike to Bug Moran's and get our share of the coin, then jump for parts unknown. That's final, Sol, so close your trap and come on. We'll go straight to Bug's house and get——"

Nick Carter heard no more—but he heard that much distinctly, as the couple passed the doorway in which he was crouching.

He did not step out and arrest them, as he at first was inclined to do. He started up, paused for a moment to consider, recalling the mission upon which he had sent Chick—and then he stole out and darted at top speed toward the door from which the couple had emerged.

"Five minutes, eh?" he muttered. "Settle his hash, eh? I'll see about that! Violet Hyde and Sol Perry bound for Bug Moran's house, all pals of Morley and Phil Dacey. Moran's house—that's good enough for me. There'll be a settlement of another kind before long, providing——"

Nick had reached the door and was thinking of Chick. He did not wait to ring. He entered, whipping out his searchlight, and bounded up the stairs to the second floor. He came to the door of the tenement—and heard the desperate banging within.

Nick did not pause for a moment. He drew back and threw himself against the door—and the lock broke from the casing as if its socket had been made of matchwood.

With his searchlight glaring in front of him, Nick rushed through the miserable parlor and in the direction of the sound. It led him into the dining room. The light fell upon a moving object near the floor.

It was Chick Carter's head, just thrust for fresh air and safety through the broken panel of the closet door.

"Great Scott!" Nick cried, crouching and tearing the bandage from his assistant's mouth.

Chick looked up at him and laughed, though he was gasping for breath.

"I'd have fooled the jade, all right," were his first words. "But 'twas a close call—the nearest I ever came to death."

Nick could readily believe it when he sensed the choking fumes of sulphur.

CHAPTER X.

THE LAST TURN.

In the meantime, while Nick Carter and Chick were engaged as described, Patsy Garven was not idle. A flying trip to the Eccles Building, in which Celia Dillon was employed, followed by a few hurried inquiries, enabled Patsy to learn where the girl lived. It proved to be in a lodging house in Eighteenth Street, at which Patsy arrived on foot fifteen minutes later, having dismissed his taxicab in Third Avenue.

He was about to mount the steps and ring the bell, when, through a figured-glass pane in the front door, he saw a girl descending the stairs in the lighted hall. She appeared to be in haste and was nervously buttoning her jacket, which, together with a description Nick had given him, convinced Patsy of two facts. One, that this girl was his quarry. Another, that she was going out on serious business.

"She's just about heading for a rendezvous with some of the gang," flashed through Patsy's mind. "It'll be better to arrest all hands, if I'm right, than her alone. I'll give her a little rope and take a chance."

Instead of mounting the steps, therefore, Patsy drew back and pretended to be walking by, just as the girl was

coming out. At the same moment, too, a shrill feminine voice cried down the stairs:

"Say! Hold on, Celia! What's on for to-night? I've got an evening off."

"Nothing doing, Fannie," Celia Dillon paused to reply. "I've got an important date."

The bang of the door followed her last words, and five minutes later Patsy Garvan shadowed her up the steps of the Eighteenth Street station of the Third Avenue L.

Twenty minutes took Celia Dillon to her destination—an inferior brick house in Rivington Street, the first of a three-story block not far from the water front.

"Gee!" thought Patsy, after watching her enter. "It'll be a short ride to headquarters, if I should happen to nail the bunch. They're down among the stuss joints and the card fiends, all right, which seems perfectly in a line with Nick's theory. I'll have a look at that doorplate."

Stealing up the steps toward which he had sauntered, he read the tenant's name—P. Moran.

"Pete Moran—by gum!" thought Patsy, quickly moving on. "Better known as Bug Moran, for having spent two years in an insane asylum. I guess he's bug-house, all right, or he wouldn't have been engaged in a job of this kind. He also used to work in Dacey's gambling house. It's a safe wager now that all of these crooks were members of the Morley-Dacey gang, and that Nick has hit close to the truth. I'll make sure I'm right by finding out who is in the house, and then take steps to gather in the whole gang."

Patsy had crossed the street and was sizing up the front of the house. None of the rooms were lighted. The front hall also was in darkness. Retracing his steps, he entered a narrow court between the end of the block and a building occupied by a wholesale produce house, then closed for the night.

Picking his way into the darker court, Patsy came to a high plank fence, inclosing a small, paved yard back of the house. The gate was closed and bolted. Grasping the top of the fence, Patsy drew himself up and looked over it.

He discovered what he was seeking, the location of the persons then in the house. He saw the lighted window of a basement kitchen, the drawn curtain, the closed door of a back entry, and he also saw that the yard was deserted. Noiselessly, he climbed over the fence and dropped into the yard, then unbolted the gate and set it ajar.

"I'll have things ready," he said to himself, little dreaming that he was paving the way for others. "Now, by ginger, to find out who is in there and what help I shall need."

Stealing to the window, Patsy peered between the drawn curtain and the casing. He could see part of the kitchen, the oil lamp that lighted it, a table near one of the walls, and two men who occupied chairs near by, both of whom he immediately recognized.

One was Bug Moran himself, a tall, well-built, good-looking man of forty. He was seated back from the table, and Celia Dillon, talking with much earnestness, was seated on Moran's knees, which rightly convinced Patsy that the girl was infatuated with the gambler, and that she from the first had been involved in the crime resulting in Nell Lackland's death.

The other man was a huge negro, named Tarbox, formerly a doorkeeper in Dacey's gambling house, the same negro with whom Nick had had an encounter on the day he arrested Morley, Dacey, and their confederates for the Fordham robbery.

Gazing at his burly figure, his huge legs and feet, which were turned in even while he was seated, Patsy saw plainly enough that this was the crook whose footprints had been discovered back of Nell Lackland's house by Nick and himself.

"Moran and Paul Tarbox," thought he, briefly watching them. "This does settle it. It's the old gang, or all there is left of them, and Dorrington's stenographer is in league with them. She has gone to the bad for Bug Moran, if not bad from the first."

Confirming his suspicion, Patsy could plainly hear what the girl then was saying. She was, in fact, hurriedly disclosing Nick's visit to Dorrington's office, and how she afterward had telephoned the circumstances to Violet Hyde.

"I told her the whole business, Bug," she was saying. "Nick Carter knows very well it was not a case of suicide. That newspaper story is only a blind, one of his crafty artifices."

"And Violet knows about it?" questioned Moran gravely.

"Sure thing, Bug," Celia forcibly declared. "She's wise to the whole situation—or ought to be."

"She must know, at least, just what we're up against," put in Tarbox apprehensively. "If Nick Carter is out to get her, it won't be long, Bug, before he'll be out to get us. We'd better whack up the dough and bolt."

"We'll wait a bit," Moran replied decidedly. "I always use my pals on the square. Violet knows it, too, and that's why she trusted me with the coin until we could conveniently divide it, after waiting to learn how the cat was going to jump."

"But she's jumped the wrong way for us," growled Tarbox.

"We'll wait a bit, nevertheless," Moran insisted. "Violet and Sol will show up here before long, if Celia is right, and then we'll determine what to do."

"I know I'm right, Bug," Celia Dillon asserted. "It's dead open and shut that Nick Carter suspects the truth, or very near it."

"But how can he account for Dan Dorrington's disappearance? He must know that he was at Nell's house that night," Moran perplexedly argued.

"Most likely," said Celia.

"But he cannot have learned that we nailed him, that Tarbox brought him here in a wagon, nor that we now have him in the cooler. Carter may suspect, but he cannot have found proofs of the whole business."

"I don't know about that, Bug. He's infernally far-sighted."

"Violet may know something more. I'll go out and telephone to her, unless she shows up soon. In the meantime——"

Patsy Garvan decided not to wait to hear more, having heard enough to serve his purpose, in fact, and now feeling sure that Dorrington and the money mentioned, unquestionably formerly in the hands of Morley, were in Moran's house. The speedy arrest of these three of the crooks seemed like child's play to Patsy, and he turned to steal out of the yard to call a policeman—and found himself looking into the muzzle of a leveled revolver, nearly under his very nose.

The revolver was in the hand of Sol Perry, at whose elbow stood Violet Hyde with another, her face as

ghastly white as if the hand of death had been laid upon her.

"Not a sound, Garvan," Perry fiercely hissed. "It will be your last."

Patsy stood motionless and silent. He had no sane alternative.

"The door, Violet—open it," Perry hurriedly added. "We must get him under cover."

"And then get out ourselves, or we'll be done for!" muttered the woman, between her teeth. "These devils—is there no limit to what they can accomplish?"

She turned and knocked lightly on the door. The two had, as a matter of fact, stolen into the court and yard to make sure that all was well before entering the house, and had discovered Patsy crouching in the glow from the lighted window, at once recognizing him.

Violet Hyde's knock brought Tarbox to the door, who beheld with a gasp the scene in the yard.

"Stow that," Violet hissed. "Bring that young devil in here. We'll end him as I've ended another. But we must divide the coin and bolt, for there's no telling what more Nick Carter may have up his sleeve."

Nor was there, in fact, for Nick and Chick were listening at that moment outside the open gate, having arrived just in time to see Perry and the woman stealing into the court.

They waited until Patsy, forced into the entry by Perry, had stepped into the kitchen, where Violet Hyde had hurriedly gone, and Nick then nudged Chick and whispered:

"Now, before they can close the door! Drop the first who shows fight, and that will quell the others. Come!"

Together, weapons in hand, they bounded across the narrow yard. With a rush, they forced Perry, Tarbox, and Patsy through the entry and the open door of the kitchen, where they had all five of the gang cornered before they fairly realized what had happened.

"Hands up!" Nick shouted. "It's all off for you rascals. Hands up, or some one goes down and out! Up with them!"

A shriek from Violet Hyde mingled with his fierce commands. She saw Chick, safe and sound, and with a revolver in each hand, and her nerve forsook her. She dropped in a faint on the floor, while Moran, Perry, and Celia Dillon shrank, thunderstruck and appalled, against the wall. The huge negro, however, reached for his hip pocket, only to pull back his hand when he saw Nick's revolver cover him.

"Careful, Tarbox," said Nick. "I floored you once with my fist. If I do it with a bullet, you'll never rise again."

Tarbox scowled and held up his hands.

There was very little to it after that. The three detectives easily subdued the others, and five minutes later all of the gang were disarmed and in irons. One hour later saw them behind prison bars, which marked for a long time the end of their knavish career, each later receiving a life sentence for the killing of their former friend, Nell Lackland.

The facts of the case were almost precisely what Nick had deduced after detecting the altered post mark, as set forth to Patsy, and which, therefore, need no review. Coupled with what Patsy had overheard that night, the chain of circumstances was complete.

Daniel Dorrington was found, securely bound, in Moran's cellar, where he had been since the night of the murder. In a cupboard in the kitchen, moreover, was found nearly ninety thousand dollars in cash, brought from a secret concealment in the foundation wall of Morley's cellar. This, as Nick had suspected, had been the motive for the crime.

"It's blood money, all right," was Patsy Garvan's comment, when the matter was being discussed with Dorrington on the night of the arrest. "It has cost one life, at least, and you a lot of trouble, Mr. Dorrington."

"So much trouble, Patsy, that I'll have no part of it," Dorrington said decidedly. "We'll try to turn it to better uses. You take it, Nick, and hand it over to some worthy charity."

"Do you mean that, Dorrington?" Nick inquired.

"I certainly do."

"Well, I think it's a wise step," said Nick approvingly. "I'll wager, that done, that you will have had the last of your troubles from the Morley-Dacey gang. With the arrest of these crooks to-night, we have them all canned."

Nick's prediction proved to be correct. Prison walls were all that was left for most of the knaves who have figured in these pages.

THE END.

The next issue of this weekly will be No. 70, out January 10th, and will be something in the manner of a sequel to "A Princess of the Underworld," which appeared in a recent issue of this weekly. The title will be, "A Queen of Her Kind; or, A Beautiful Woman's Nerve." This story will relate more of the experiences of Cora Dumont and her accomplice, Mrs. Sunderlin, and of the wiles which beautiful Cora succeeded in throwing about the great detective to win him over to her ways. In this story, Nick Carter meets with one of the most thrilling experiences of his life, and encounters a narrow escape from a fate that would have overthrown him forever.

GAMES.

The Game of the Black Mask.—All the company, except the director and one other, leave the room; the latter is one chosen by lot to remain. After a pause, the director claps his hands, when a figure, entirely covered by a sheet, enters. The cloth should trail on the carpet, and should be hung over a sweeping broom, carried by the figure, so as to give height. On the top, where the face would be supposed to be, there ought to be pinned a piece of black crape, cloth, or any other black material, to represent a mask. This will make a very respectable-looking ghost. As "the ghost walks," the step should be slow and solemn. It will move across the room, and then turn, and depart as it has entered. Then the director will ask the person who remains in the room to guess who it is. If he does so correctly, the ghost exchanges places with him or her, as the case may be, and pays a forfeit as well; but if the guess is wrong, the person who made the mistake subjects himself to a forfeit. It will be the business of those who enact ghost to disguise as much as possible their identity.

"They Can do Little Who Cannot do This, This, This." This game is played thus: The party seat themselves in a circle, or round the fire; the first person then takes a stick in the right hand, and knocking the floor, says: "They can do little who cannot do this, this, this." Then, passing the stick from the right to the left hand, pre-

sents it to the next person. The little folks think the catch is in the number of knocks, or in the words spoken, when it is merely in taking the stick in the right hand, and passing it with the left hand to the next person. A forfeit must be paid for each mistake.

The Game of Frog in the Middle.—This is another noisy game. A player, selected by lot, sits on the carpet, while the others form a circle round him, taking him unawares every time he turns his back, pulling him, pinching him, buffeting him, and pulling his hair. When he succeeds in catching one of them, the captive must change places with him. As the players dance and caper round the frog, they cry: "Frog in the middle—catch him who can."

A SKIN GAME;

Or, Steve Manley Among the Tanners.

By ALDEN F. BRADSHAW.

CHAPTER V.

A PROPOSED MEETING.

The next moment, Steve heard Foley mount the team and begin to throw off the covering to the ground at one side.

"Get hold, there, you blarsted Israelite!" he presently growled, when he had cleared the load of its covering. "Help haul off this trunk!"

"Vat's in der trunk, Meester Foley? It's der heaviest trunk I never saw."

Steve heard the words and his heart leaped into his mouth.

Would Foley notice the extra weight, and examine the trunk to learn the cause?

It was a moment of awful suspense to the young detective. But Foley was too intent on getting through with the job, and Steve felt an unutterable sense of relief on hearing the truckman say simply:

"There's nothing in it that you want."

"But there's something in it that wants you!" thought Steve, wondering how the desperate episode was likely to terminate.

"You vos quite sure there isn't, Meester Foley? I vos in hopes——"

"There are only five cigarettes in there," interrupted Foley grimly, "and they are for the doctor and his students. Get hold here, I say."

Then Steve felt the heavy trunk yanked round by one of its handles, and then it was hauled heavily off and deposited on the floor of the room.

"Drag it over in that corner!" cried Gray, now rejoining the others. "I'll look after what's in it to-morrow. Make room for the other two."

"Vy, certainly, dogdor!"

Following the trunk came the two long boxes, which were placed one upon the other at the opposite side of the room.

Steve peered out from under the lid of the trunk, and now a glance told him what the two boxes cantained.

"Bodies from some place," he decided. "An' der next job for me is ter find out where der things come from."

These, also, having been hauled into the room, Foley next sprang down outside, and threw the loose straw back into the body of the wagon. Then he clambered back into the room again, leaving the team standing in the yard; and the young physician quickly closed and secured the heavy door.

Steve had gained his point and now was inside of the house. And he now understood that this great, bare room was the physician's operating and dissecting room, and that the several shelves at one side were the depositories for human bodies.

This, too, accounted for the exceeding coldness of the room, the temperature of which was about like that of an ice box.

"Vos these der bodies of men or vimen, goot Meester Foley?" said the Jew, in wheedling tones, as Foley returned to the room.

"They're both men."

"Ah, vat goot fortune! Der hide of a man makes much der better leather for chooze. You vos a long dime supplying us, goot Meester Foley."

"Well, I couldn't bring 'em in before they croaked, could I, you infernal contortionist?"

"Before dey vos dead, you mean? Ah, but you might have hastened it a leedle. Der peezness vos so goot that these men vos vorth more dead than alive. The last pair of chooze has gone out of my shop, and goot Meester Patten sold seven pairs in Harrisburg last veek. At this rate, each body is vorth about——"

"You close your trap, Meckleburg," Dr. Gray now commanded, turning from locking the door.

"I'll not bother to take away the boxes this trip; store 'em away till I'm in town again. I'll take 'em next time."

"There may be no next time," returned Gray curtly.

"No nexd dime, dogdor?"

"That's what I said. But I'll look after the boxes. They'll make good kindling wood, if nothing else," rejoined Gray, whose face had worn a steady frown since Foley's arrival with the bodies.

"Go into my office, both of you," he added sharply. "I've something to say to you."

Then Steve heard them leave the room.

The doctor closed the door after them, but did not lock it, and presently the sound of their steps died away in the hall.

Then Steve made another move.

"Der villain is off, and it's time der leading man came on," he said to himself.

Softly raising the lid of the trunk, he left his close quarters, and made sure to close the trunk after him.

Creeping to the door by which the men had departed, he softly opened it and let himself into the adjoining room.

It was an agreeable change from that of the doctor's dead room.

"The lodgers in there don't bother with yer much, but they ain't companionable," he said to himself, as he left the place. "They don't even blush when they give yer der cold shoulder. Now for der sawbones, der Jew, and der truckman. Tree of a kind! And since I'm always straight, I'd oughter beat 'em dead easy. The dialogue they puts up oughter be worth the hearing."

Then the sound of their voices reached Steve's ears. The men were in an office off one side of the deep main hall of the house.

Selecting a corner near the rise of the stairs, Steve lay

down upon the floor, safe from probable discovery, and listened.

"No, Foley, I don't want you to come here again, unless I countermand this order," the physician was forcibly saying. "I told you this might be the last visit, and I repeat it."

"But, dogdor——"

"Shut up, Meckleburg, and I'll explain," interrupted Gray sharply. "I'm beginning to feel that this business is no longer safe."

"It never was safe," growled Foley, with a toss of his huge head. "But most money ain't made in the safest schemes."

"I've something to consider besides the money," retorted the doctor. "I'm thinking of leaving here and going to Cleveland. Without knowing precisely why, I feel that it is getting warm around here, and I may decide to light out."

"When are you going?"

"I have no definite plans as yet."

"You vos afraid without reason, dogdor!" cried Meckleburg, in accents of regret. "The peezness vosn't suspected. Never in der vorld. And you have a legal right to buy der bodies and bring 'em here to your house. A legal right, dogdor!"

"I'm aware of all that," returned Gray, "yet I might find it difficult to show what use I have for so many of them. I'll have no more of them brought here for the present, and that settles it!"

"But vat are ve going to do, if you go out of the ledder trust?" protested Meckleburg, throwing up his hands with a dismal groan.

"You can ring in some other doctor to take my place."

"But that ain't so easy. Der other dogdors ain't all so vize as you. Think of der goot money ve give you for every skin. I could use a dozen of 'em, if I could only get 'em."

"There'll be another ready by Monday," growled Foley, who was inclined to side with the Jew in this matter.

"Think of that, dogdor; there'll be anodder ready by Monday."

"Well, you cannot bring him here!" cried Gray, very decidedly. "I cannot have these others ready before Monday, and that settles it."

"But, goodness gracious, dogdor, I must have der skin! Is der party a man or a voman, goot Meester Foley?"

"He is a man, and a big one."

"Vat's der matter vid him?"

"He had a stroke, and is dying."

"Vat a shame der stroke didn't finish der job at vunce! Then you could have brought him in vid der odders."

"I'll not have him brought here, as the matter now stands," the physician again protested.

"But I musd have the skin, dogdor," persisted the Jew.

"Send him direct to the tannery, then."

"To der tannery?"

"Yes, and let them remove it out there."

"Oh, goodness gracious, dogdor, that von't do at all!" cried Meckleburg, rising to pace the floor in dismal excitement.

"Why won't it do?"

"Dose tanners vos only churnimen, vhen it comes to taking der skin off of a man," protested Meckleburg, wildly waving his hands. "They vould ruin it entirely. I vouldn't think of letting them do it, not for der vorld."

"I'll tell you what you can do about it!" cried Foley, turning to the physician. "If you don't want him brought here, I'll tell you what you can do."

"What's that?"

"When are the others to be ready?"

"Not before Monday," said Gray decidedly.

"Shall you take them out to the yards yourself?"

"Yes, that was my intention," grimly nodded the doctor. "I want to have a talk with the parties out there, also."

"In that case," suggested Foley; "I will drive the man over there Monday morning, instead of bringing him here, and you can do the job at the yards."

"That's der very thing, dogdor!"

"Well, I don't object to that," rejoined Gray presently. Yet his face, if it were read aright, indicated that he had some other object in so readily consenting to the plan proposed.

"But how do you know that this man will be dead by Monday morning?" he quickly added.

"There is no doubt about that part of it," returned Foley. "He was near enough to it when I came away this afternoon."

"Couldn't it be hastened a leedle, if necessary?" demanded Meckleburg, with immediate apprehensions. "Think vat der returns vill be vhen der vork is all done."

"It will not be necessary, I tell you!" cried Foley, quite angrily.

"We will leave it in that way, then," said Doctor Gray, abruptly rising. "I will bring the other two out to the tannery shortly after noon, Monday, and you may meet me there with the other party."

"That will be all right; I will drive over there during the morning."

"And I'll come out to der yards, also," cried Meckleburg eagerly. "Ve can have a nice leedle house party. Ve can have a leedle peezness meeting of der ledder trust right in der tannery."

The physician did not say that this plan would suit him to the letter; but, nevertheless, he thought it, and an expression vaguely pictured in his thin, white face also showed it.

"Well," demanded Foley, looking up at him, "have you said your little verse?"

"For the present, yes," replied Gray.

"Then I think I'll be going."

"You needn't hurry."

"I've a long drive before me."

"Will you have another drink before leaving?"

"I'll have two, if it's all the same to you," said Foley, with a laugh.

"Quite so," rejoined Gray readily. "You needn't rise; I'll bring the glasses in here."

Steve crouched lower under the stairs.

The physician strode from his office and through the hall, passing so near Steve that he might have touched him; yet the young detective luckily escaped observation.

Having procured the liquor and glasses from the side room, Doctor Gray immediately rejoined his confederates.

Steve decided it was time for him to make a sneak.

"Der farmer is going back where der bodies came from," he said to himself. "Mebbe der trolley cars don't run out his way, so I'll go in der victoria along with him.

"If there's going to be a meeting of der Leather Trust, sure all of der stockholders oughter be represented. I thinks I'll try ter get inter der meeting by proxy."

CHAPTER VI.

STEVE MAKES A HIT WITH FOLEY.

Slipping along the floor with the silent sinuosity of a snake, Steve looked up and down the hall.

The door of the doctor's office was standing open, and to pass it and reach the front door of the house without being seen or heard, Steve decided to be impossible.

Ten feet from the break of the stairs under which he was lying there was a closed door which eidently opened upon a stairway leading to the basement of the house.

"I reckon that's der only avernoo open for der public," Steve was forced to conclude. "I could go by the way I came in, only der sawbones locked der door and put der key in his kit. Mebbe he was afraid der other occupants of der place would get a move on.

"Well, here goes for a seat in der front hack!"

Quietly rising, he stole softly down the carpeted hall, and with his gaze steadily fixed on the door of the doctor's office, he halted at that leading to the cellar.

Taking an opportunity when the men were talking loudest, he quietly turned the knob.

The door yielded to his pressure.

A flight of stairs was before him.

Quickly slipping out of view, Steve softly closed the door after him, and warily felt his way along the wall and down the stairs.

They led him directly into a room under the dead room.

At the rear of this was a narrow window, some four feet from the ground. It swung down on hinges, and was secured at the bottom with a wooden button.

To open this window and crawl out into the back yard was but child's play, and, within another moment, Steve was standing beside the wagon in the gloom of the yard.

One of the teamster's horses heard him, and gave vent to a shrill neigh.

"That's der call ter get aboard!" muttered Steve. "An' it's safe der cap'n of der craft will respond to der notice."

For Steve to clamber over the wheel and into the body of the wagon was the work of but a moment.

Then he quickly made a hole in the loose straw which Foley had replaced in the wagon, and covered himself in a way to preclude probable observation.

"Now, then, der caravan can start when ever der boss is ready," he chuckled cheerfully. "He'll have a livelier load ter take out than der one he brought in.

"It's safe enough I turn down der next trick, fur this kind of work is my long suit. By to-morrow I'll know where the bodies come from, and by Monday I'll be onto der tannery.

"That'll gimme der top hand, an' then I rakes in der whole pot.

"Hully gee! Wouldn't der chief open his face with a grin could he see der king-pin of der force at just this moment?"

These gratulations hardly had crossed Steve's mind when the three men emerged from the house.

"Open the gate for me, Doctor Gray, and I'll be off at once," said Foley, feeling around on the ground until he had found his whip.

"All right, Jim."

"You'll be sure der man is ready by Monday, von't you, göot Meester Foley?" pleaded Meckleburg, hanging to the teamster as if to a long-lost friend.

"He'll be ready right enough," growled the other. "He's most ready now."

The man turned the team in the yard, then mounted to the seat.

He gave only one glance back into the body of the wagon, but Steve was then safe enough from observation.

"So long, Meckleburg!" he growled, with a friendliness indicating him to be a more kindly ruffian at heart than his general conduct manifested. "See you Monday."

"Yes, Meester Foley, vidout fail!" cried the miscreant, dancing along beside the moving team. "And be sure you bring der man, Meester Foley; be sure you bring der man!"

"You're an infernal rat!" returned Foley bluntly.

"Drive quietly till you have left this back street, Jim," cautioned Doctor Gray, as the heavy team lumbered through the gate.

"All right, Dick."

"Good night."

"Good night."

Then the gate in the back fence closed behind team and man and boy; and shut out from the world the still, cold forms within, designed by God and nature for return to no such base uses as those outrageously intended.

It took only a few minutes to leave the gloomy back street, and within the next half hour the outskirts of the city itself were left behind.

Instead of the rumbling pavements, came the soft earth of the suburban roads.

Instead of the heavy atmosphere of the city, came the free, sweet air of the country, and the sweep of the night breeze.

By these signs only could Steve Manley tell where they were; but whither they were going still remained a mystery.

He dared not look out to see in what direction they were departing, for the least rustle of the straw might betray him.

Once out of the city, Foley let the team set their own pace, which was slow enough.

The man himself nodded for a time, then began humming a church tune.

An hour passed; then a second and third; and Steve, cramped and sore, for a jolting board is a hard bed, wondered if the journey was never coming to an end.

Then, when it was long after midnight, Foley made a move.

First he yawned heavily, then tied the reins around the whipstock.

Evidently he had decided that the animals knew the way home as well as he did.

Then, with another deep-drawn yawn, he threw his legs over the wagon seat and prepared to tumble himself over upon the straw, to sleep out the balance of the journey.

"Hully gee! I'm blowed if the blooming guy ain't coming down here!" thought Steve, with a thrill of dismay.

And before the startled youngster could frame another comment, the teamster had rolled off the seat and down into the straw, squarely on top of the motionless young detective.

It was a situation to have tried the nerve of a man, but a boy as clever as Steve was more than equal to it.

"Here, what youse doing, you blooming jay?" he cried, as a roar of amazement broke from Foley, and both began a scramble to get uppermost in the straw.

"Ain't there room enough in der team for der two of us? D'ye want der whole bed? Couldn't yer turn in widout waking me up, an' spoiling der dream I was having? Youse give me a pain in der side!"

By this time both man and boy had managed to emerge from the scrabble, and now were sitting upright in the straw, Steve glaring defiantly at the astonished teamster, and Foley staring back at him with an expression on his bearded face that would utterly defy description.

"What are you doing here, anyway?" Foley at last found voice to ask.

"What's that got to do with waking me up out of a sound sleep?" retorted Steve, in accents of resentful grievance. "Don't you know a kid what's growing needs plenty of sleep?"

"Look here——"

"Oh, you go chase yerself! Ain't I got a right to be on der earth? Was yer trying ter put out me light all at once, coming down on me like a t'ousand bricks? If youse half my size I'd take yer out in der road and put a new face on yer. I've a mind ter do it as it is—— Say, youse! 'tain't no laughing matter!"

Yet Steve felt much more like laughing than the other did, for a veritable roar of merriment had broken from the lungs of big Jim Foley, upon whom the utter absurdity of the scene and episode had dawned with all its force.

The audacious front Steve was putting up, the curious figure he cut, still half buried in the straw, and the idea of the belligerent youngster threatening to take into the road a man five times his weight, with the intention of putting a new face on him—all combined to strike Jim Foley as being so ludicrous that not for a full minute could he check the roars of laughter that broke from him one after the other, sounding quite like thunder on the silence of the night.

There was not a house in sight.

The country road was winding between stretches of green meadows, backed by more remote woodlands, and the glitter of a myriad of stars in the purple sky was the only light that relieved the night darkness.

These were the features that quickly appealed to Steve, during the interval employed by Jim Foley in the enjoyment and final suppression of his boisterous laughing.

When, after several ineffectual attempts, for every time he looked at Steve, sitting there so cool and defiant, his laughter broke forth anew—when, finally, he in part regained his composure, he cried roundly:

"Well, you certainly have got more nerve for a little kid than any I ever clapped eyes on."

"Who are youse calling a little kid?" growled Steve, with a ferocious glare.

"Well, ain't you? You don't think you're a Cardiff giant, do you?"

"I'm big enough ter look out for myself."

"How did you come in the wagon, anyway?"

"I climbed in over the tailboard. How did yer s'pose I came in—out of a burrloon?"

"Where are you going?"

"Any old place suits me for a change."

"Don't you know where you're going?"

"Sure I knows where I'm going! I'm going along with you, if youse leaves me alone."

"Well, you don't think I'd chuck a kid like you out in the road four miles from the nearest house?" cried Foley, with another loud laugh.

"I'd find me way home if yer did."

"Have you got a home?"

"Sure I's got a home. D'ye s'pose I lives in der air, like a bird?"

That Steve Manley was other than what he was pretending to be never for a moment entered Foley's head; and not only the loneliness of the ride, but also the cut of the boy's jib, inclined him greatly in Steve's favor.

"Do you live in Pennville?" he inquired.

"When I'm ter home I do," grinned Steve.

"Who do you live with?"

"With meself, of course. D'ye think I was married, an' raising a family?"

"Who are your folks?"

"I ain't got any folks. I lodges in the 'Box Hotel' and takes me meals out."

"Where in thunder is the Box Hotel?"

"Any old box. A shoe box, or a dry-goods box, when der wedder's warm."

"What do you do in the winter?"

"I sleep in der *Times* office. Der editor is a personal friend."

Foley rolled over in the straw and had another laugh, then came up to ask:

"Do you know how far you are from Pennville?"

"That don't bother me none," returned Steve. "All der places look alike ter me."

"Well, you're many a mile from the city."

"So much der better. Der country air is good for me health."

"Where did you get into the wagon?"

"When youse was driving along Center Avenue," Steve promptly replied. "I couldn't find nothing else ter steal, so I thought I'd steal a ride."

"And you fell asleep, eh?"

"Sure I did. It was like being in a cradle."

"What's your name?"

"Me name's Foley."

"What's that?" cried the teamster, with a broad grin and stare.

"Me name's Foley—Jimmy Foley!" cried Steve. "What's der matter wid yer ears? Don't yer know the United States langwidge?"

"Do you mean to tell me your name is Jimmy Foley?" roared the real Foley, with a boisterous manifestation of delight, and little dreaming the bold trick Steve was playing on him.

"Oh, you come off yer jolly!" cried Steve, in grieved tones. "Youse guying me now with yer laugh. Youse can't fill me up with no false music. I'm wise ter der curves of any they can put in der box. I'm clean wool, I am, and any er der gang'll tell yer Jimmy Foley's der real gent. Don't gimme der laugh unless yer means it. I'd rudder a man gimme der chilly mit."

Jimmy Foley was never so hoodwinked in all his life. And never before had a single individual made so pronounced a hit with him.

The fact that Steve was clever tickled him immensely; but the announcement that his name was precisely the same as his own tickled him most of all.

"But the laugh is on the square, Jimmy Foley," he growled fraternally, and thrust out his huge hand for Steve to grip. "And my name's Jim Foley, also."

"Now youse giving me der jolly again!"

"On the level, I'm not. And to prove it, I'll take you along with me till I stop, and give you a bite to eat and a crib to sleep in. I'll put you up over Sunday, and, when some team is going into town, I'll send you back the way you come out, not afoot. Now, how does that hit you?"

"Right on der point of der chin," grinned Steve. "It knocks me out altogether."

And thus it was that young Steve Manley worked his way into the very heart of the skin game.

TO BE CONTINUED.

HOW CY EATON MADE HIS PILE.

By DUKE CUYLER.

A party of friends were sitting around the hospitable board of our mutual friend Cy Eaton, partaking of the generous fare, when one of them exclaimed, bringing his hand down with such force upon the table as to cause the glasses to jump about:

"How was it that you made your fortune so quick, Cy? If I thought I stood a ghost of a chance, I would be off to-morrow."

All of us gazed up into the face of our host as our friend said this, and almost held our breath, as we waited for his answer.

We knew that he had gone to California a poor man, and that in less than two years he had returned with an abundant store of the yellow dust. How he had obtained so much in so short a time none of us had ever learned.

"Perhaps you would not care to go through so much as I have, even to make your pile," said our host quietly.

"I would go through anything," was the answer. "Nothing short of death should stop me."

"But I endured that. In fact, I was dead and buried!"

"Dead and buried?" we all repeated, in a breath.

"Yes."

"How could that be?" we said again.

Our host threw open his shirt front, and upon his breast we saw the livid mark of a knife.

The scar was just above his heart, and it seemed a wonder how he could have received it, and still be alive to tell us the story.

We expressed our surprise both by looks and words.

"You want to know how it was that I made my pile so quickly. Well, it ain't often that I tell the story, but I will do so to-night to please you. You have seen the scar that the wound left that sent me to my grave; for, boys, I was buried once, as surely as we all expect to be.

"You all know that when I went to California I was as poor as a church mouse. I had all that I could do to procure my outfit and get the money with which to pay my passage. But I managed to get there at last, and for a time, even then, it did seem as though I was doomed to bad luck. Everything I tried failed to prosper with me, and at last I went to the mines. There, for a time, my luck was little, if any, better. My claim proved to be worthless, and after a time I abandoned it, and in company with Bill Harris and Seth Grant, I set off on a tour of exploration among the mountains. I knew that people had made a grand strike in discovering new placers, and I told the boys that I did not see why it might not be our luck to do the same. They were of the same mind, and for a couple of weeks we toiled and hunted among the mountains, but all to no purpose. Our provisions by this time were running short, and in a little time I knew that we should be obliged to return to the settlement.

"One day we set out upon our exploration as usual. 'Long toward noon we became separated, and I found myself alone among the rocks that overhung a deep cañon, at the bottom of which flowed a wild mountain stream. It was nothing new for us to separate in this way, but we had an understanding that we were to meet at nightfall at some point ahead.

"For a couple of hours I toiled onward, using my pick here and there, wherever I thought there might be a chance to find the yellow dust.

"Tired at last with my tramp, I threw myself down in the shadow of a rock not far from the edge of the cañon. Stretched out at full length upon the earth I lay musing upon the hard luck that had followed me thither. Like the old man of the sea that clung to the shoulders of Sindbad, I could not throw it off.

"Lying there full of these thoughts, my eyes wandered about the spot, and I noticed a little way off a sort of funnel-shaped hole in the rock. It did not interest me very much, for I had seen many such in that section. Why I speak of it here you will soon know.

"Tired with my day's tramp, I at last fell into that condition which is half asleep and half awake. From it I was startled by the sound of footsteps close beside me. Opening my eyes, I saw, standing beside me, three as villainous-looking Mexicans as I ever beheld.

"I knew in a minute it was no slight danger that threatened me, and I attempted hastily to spring to my feet. It was a signal for the cowardly villains to strike, and one of them aimed a blow at me with his knife. You have seen where it struck.

"I sank back upon the earth, with the blood pouring from the wound, and a terrible fainting at my heart. But although lying motionless as if dead, I was conscious of all that was passing about me.

"In a few moments they had rifled my pockets of the little they contained, and then appeared to hold a short consultation. I could not understand their talk, but it did not last long. Raising me in their arms, they bore me toward the hole in the rocks of which I have spoken.

"A terrible thrill shot through my heart. They were going to bury me there, that no trace of their crime might be discovered.

"I was as helpless as one dead—as perhaps they thought me.

"Another moment, and I was shooting down into my tomb. Then all was a blank.

"The next thing I remember was a consciousness of some one bending over me, and a voice saying:

"'He's coming back to life.'

"The voice sounded strange to me, but I recognized it at once as that of Will Harris.

"I opened my eyes, and saw the glare of a torch about me, lighting up what seemed to be the black walls of a well. My friends were bending over me, and at that moment I remember wondering to find that I was alive.

"How could a man receive the blow I had, and come down through the rugged shaft above me, and still be alive?

"In a little time I was able to speak, and then they told me how it was that they had found me. They had seen the villains when they had thrown me down into what they had meant should be my tomb. But they never left the spot alive. A couple of shots from their rifles had done for two of them, and their revolvers had finished the other.

"Then they had sought to find my body, for they had no hope of finding life in it. The rough sides of the shaft allowed them to clamper down, and at the bottom they had found me lying half buried in a bed of soft sand, that had broken my fall.

"An examination of my wound showed them that it was not a mortal one, though I was insensible from the blow and the blood I had lost.

"Through their exertions I had been brought back to consciousness; but now how was I to be got out of my tomb?

"From the bottom where we were, there was a passage leading away, none knew whither. Torch in hand, Will Harris followed it, and soon returned with the news that it led out to the water's edge, from which there was an easy ascent to the cliffs above.

"A moment after his return, Seth Grant uttered a cry of joyful surprise. He had been delving in the sand beside me, and now held up a handful of shining particles.

"It was pure virgin gold.

"There was more treasure in my tomb than was ever buried with an Inca. Never in our wildest dreams had we beheld such a store of the precious metal.

"The spring floods had been washing it for ages along the passage from the bed of the river, which we found to be rich in the shining ore.

"We kept our secret well until our pile was made, and then hundreds came flocking thither. Thus, boys, it was that I won my gold, almost at the loss of my life."

WITH A MAD ENGINEER.

"Oh, there's plenty of excitement in the life," said an old engineer. "What with the chance of a wreck every mile or so, a general smash-up at the sidings, the giving way of bridges, and the forgetfulness of the dispatcher, all of which is likely to happen, I may say there is no complaint of monotony in running an engine. But the worst snap I ever struck in the business was a trip I took one time with a madman. Yes, sir, as wild a lunatic as you'd find chained and strait-jacketed in any asylum in the country. Want the story? Well, here's to it, and a straight one it is. It was in 1880 that I was serving as fireman under a man named Grady. He was a fine engineer, could do more with an engine than any one I ever saw, and knew his road like a book. I'd been with him about a year, and we got pretty thick, and he was always showing me his little gal's picture and talking about her. His wife was dead, and his sister had the child. He was just the lovingest father I ever did see. Never got drunk, like other men, but this one time I am going to tell you about. We were to go out that night, when I met him on the street just before dark, and I saw he had been drinking, but was in a mighty good humor. 'I'll be there in time,' he said to me. 'I'm just going up to the house to kiss my baby good-by.'

"Well, we parted, and I come on down to the depot. It was mighty near time to start, and I had steam all up, when here come Grady. The moment I saw him I knew there was something mighty wrong with him. 'Stead of saying 'Hello,' or something like that, he just climbed into the caboose without looking at me, but kind of staring straight ahead of him, his eyes hot and dry, and his lips as white as my shirt off duty. I thought to myself, 'Well, if this is a drunk, it's the queerest one I ever saw,' and not wishing to rile him, I kept quiet. We pulled out steady enough, Grady still saying nothing, but staring straight ahead as if he saw something in front of him. Pretty soon we become to get faster and faster, till the old engine just rocked, and I could feel the cars behind fairly jump over the rails. I did not like to say anything, for he was boss of the engine, but when he went whizzing past a station where we were to stop, without paying any more attention to it than if it had not been there, I began to think there was something mighty wrong, and I stepped forward, and, pretending to look at the dial plate, said: 'Hain't we rather going it, boss?' But he didn't answer, and I went on: 'Ain't sick, are you, Grady, old man? If you are, lie down a bit, and I'll run her a while.'

"But still he paid no attention, but would look out at the headlight and kind of mutter to himself. So I went back to shovel in the coal, but keeping an eye on him, for by this time I was sure that there was something very much wrong with him, and I began to think that what he had taken had crazed his brain, and yet his looks weren't those of a drunken man, and his hand seemed as steady as usual. But presently, whiz! we went past the lighted lamps of a small station where we were due to wait fifteen minutes for the up train. 'Goodness!' I thought; 'we'll meet that train on the main track, and then look out!'

"With this in mind I called out: 'Hello, Grady, forgot about the upbound, ain't you?' But he just stood as before, mumbling to himself in that strange fashion; and I just caught him by the arm, storming at him, 'Where are you going to, man?' and then he looked back over his shoulder at me, grinning and gnashing his teeth like a dog. 'To death!' he shouted, 'and all of you with me. I've killed my baby, and I've got to go, but you'll have to go with me.' When he said that I waited no longer, but grabbed him about the waist. I did not want to hurt him, but I had to save the train—no, both trains. But he fought me like a demon, clutching me about the throat, while I slipped my hands up to his, and there, swaying from side to side, with our breath hot in each other's face, we struggled for what seemed to be an age, with the train all the time thundering on, on to destruction. I had no thought of my own life, but I could not get the idea of the unconscious people behind and coming out of my head, so I hung on like grim death until a happy thought struck me and I yelled out: 'Look out, Grady,

there's your baby just behind you,' and as he turned to look, I brought my fist down on his head with all the strength I had left, and he fell senseless.

"Then began a race between time and me. I had to run the train back to the station where we were to pass the upbound, so away I went. The conductor rang to know what the matter was, but I had no time to answer. Away we went back, back, with me fancying every moment that I heard the other train thundering down upon us. Back, back, and on to the side track where we were to wait, and as I knew we were safe, down I fell by Grady's side in a dead faint. They found us lying there together, and I, coming to first, tried to tell them what was wrong, when my poor boss sprang to his feet, was out of the caboose, and gone into the black night. The up train was fifteen minutes late that night, and that and my mad back pull was what saved them both from destruction. Grady was found next day hiding in the woods, a jabbering idiot, and put in an asylum, where he died in a few weeks. It seems that he had gone home drinking that night, and, playing with his little girl, had tossed her in his arms, when, her head coming in contact with the ceiling, the skull was crushed and the baby left a corpse in his arms."

A CITY OF CRIPPLES.

One of the strangest places in the United States is the little city of Hazardsville, Connecticut, for in this small place nearly every person one meets is a cripple. Men without arms and legs, or with badly scarred faces, meet you at every turn, until the visitor begins to feel that he is visiting the grounds of some great hospital after a great battle. But the secret of this strange condition of the population is that near Hazardsville are the greatest powder mills in the world, and all the cripples those who have been maimed by explosions. During the day the able-bodied citizens are at work in the mills, and so only the cripples are to be seen in the streets. Strange to say, these poor creatures seem very cheerful and happy, and often one comes upon a group of ten or twenty laughing and talking, as light-hearted and contented as if they possessed all their limbs. One peculiarity will, however, strike the newcomer at once, and that is the extreme care with which they move about, as if the force of habit acquired in the powder mill still clings to them, even after they had been forced to leave their work.

MARINE ENGINEERS.

The chief engineer is assigned a place in the saloon, and though he does not keep "watch," his duties are multifarious and oppressive, having to keep listening with his trained ears to the beat of his engines, and, at any time of the day or night, to receive reports from his subordinate officers, and, if need be, coerce one of his crew to continue work.

The second engineer, who keeps "watch" eight hours our of the twenty-four, having as companion the seventh engineer, has in his "off" watch time to attend to the requisitions of the firemen and trimmers, and generally keep a good lookout below. The third and fifth engineers keep another watch; and the fourth and sixth the other or third watch.

These officers, as a rule, make every endeavor to keep up a high standard of steam, and vie with the other "watches" to obtain a record in the number of revolutions of the screw. By such records their capabilities are judged by owners; therefore it will easily be understood that the fireman who happens to faint gains little or no pity from his officers in charge.

But although the engineers control the motive power which drives the ship, and, whether in mid-ocean or in port, execute the most delicate repairs to the intricate and complicated machinery, they are quartered aloof from other officers, and have but a little better mess room than the quartermasters, who rank as first-class petty officers.

CUTTING GLASS

Sometimes we wish to cut a glass bottle, tube, or vial in two, and have no diamond. There are other ways of cutting glass that are both simple and easy. If the tube or vial is small and thin, take a piece of iron wire about two feet long, and lay it in the coals of a fire till it is red-hot in the middle. Then let one boy hold the vial, and another, with gloves or pieces of cloth, to protect his hands, pick up the wire by the cool ends and coil the hot part quickly round the vial. Click! and the glass is snapped just where the hot wire touched.

If the glass is thick and strong, scratch the glass all round, just where you wish it to break, with a small, sharp file, and then it will break readily.

To cut a larger vial or bottle, hold it by the two ends and turn it slowly over and over just above a gas jet. The gas must be turned down low, and in rolling the bottle care must be taken to keep it steady, so that it will be heated in a perfect circle. Then drop the bottle, right side up, into a pail of cold water, and it will at once fall apart.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Breaking on the wheel was a mode of capital punishment said to have been first employed in Germany, according to some writers, on the murderers of Leopold, Duke of Austria, in the fourteenth century. According to the German method of this execution, the criminal was laid on a cart wheel with his arms and legs extended, and his limbs, in that posture, fractured with an iron bar. But in France, where it was restricted to cases of assassination or other murders of an atrocious description, highway robbery, parricide, and other great crimes, the criminal was laid on a frame of wood in the form of a St. Andrew's cross, with grooves cut transversely in it above and below the knees and elbows, and the executioner struck eight blows with an iron bar so as to break the limbs at those places, sometimes finishing the criminal by two or three blows on the chest or stomach, thence called coups de grâce. He was then unbound and laid on a small carriage wheel with his face upward and his arms and legs doubled under him, there to expire, if still alive. Sometimes the executioner was directed to strangle the criminal, either before the first, or after one, two, or three blows. This punishment was abolished in France at the Revolution, but it was still resorted to in Germany as the punishment for parricide, as late as 1827, near Gottingen. The assassin of the Bishop of Ermeland, in Prussia, in 1841, was sentenced to the wheel.

THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

Cat and a Rat Friends in Prison.

A cat belonging to Robert Krocker was caught in the explosion which killed eight firemen while they were fighting a blaze in the Goodyear Building, at Milwaukee, Wis., and was buried for thirty hours. When the ruins were cleared away the cat was found imprisoned in a closet with nothing but a rat for company. Their misfortune had evidently made them friends. When the closet was opened the rat made a dash for liberty. A fireman kicked at it, but missed. Captain Featherstone ordered him to let the rat go. "If it has lived through this for thirty hours," he said, "it deserves another chance."

Outdoes Pegoud in His Air Feats.

Maurice Chevilliard, at Buc, France, recently, made Pegoud, the great trick aviator, look like a child with a toy aëroplane in comparison with his own wonderful upside-down stunts, spirals, and loop-the-loops, performed in a fifty-mile gale. On his return to Paris Chevilliard challenged Pegoud to an aëronautical duel.

Pegoud works in a specially built Bleriot monoplane, with wings adapted for upside-down flying, the aviator being strapped in his seat with a harness over his shoulders, to prevent his falling out. Chevilliard wheeled a light-weight stock Farman biplane out of the hangar at Buc, tested the machine, glanced casually at the overcast sky and the clouds scudding before the fifty-mile wind, shrugged his shoulders, stepped into his car, adjusted a single light strap around his waist, and sailed aloft as lightly, casually, and unconcernedly as a wisp of smoke from the cigarette which he had just cast aside.

To the little group of French reporters, for whom the exhibition was given, the biplane seemed to be tossed by the wind like a small boat in the seas of a raging gale in the mid-Atlantic; but soon, by a wide curve, Chevilliard was seen returning, and was then lost in the fog and lowering clouds. Only the whir of the engines, struggling against the gale, was heard.

Then suddenly the machine reappeared, diving straight through the thickest mist and standing on end, tail in air. It seemed surely a terrible accident, and the spectators gasped and started forward, when, with a graceful swoop, he recovered, and on a level keel came careening and rocketing toward the hangars, rising gradually to the height of 500 feet directly over the heads of the spectators.

At this time, when the gale seemed seized with a sudden access of fury, Chevilliard, not content with the wonderful performance of simply keeping aloft, chose to make evolutions which brought involuntary cries of admiration from all present.

Dipping and swirling, picked up and tossed by the mighty strength of the wind, the daring aviator turned his machine on its side, its wing tip pointed directly at the earth and it dropped straight as a plummet until he was so close that the spectators could almost see the whites of his eyes. Then he caught up his machine in a sweeping curve and returned again to the misty heights with wings perpendicular, and so, in wonderful lightning falls and beautiful swoops, he rocketed across the wide plain.

He finally returned to the center of the field and from a height of 800 feet, spiraled down with wings perpendicular, turning in a little more than the circumference of the machine.

When less than 60 feet from the ground, he straightened out, alighted gracefully and easily, and stepped from the aëroplane with the same air of nonchalance with which he had entered it. His only remark was that it was "a little cold up there in the wind."

For this trip he was attired in gray trousers, tan shoes with spats, a sweater, a short brown tweed coat, a cap, and gloves, but wore no goggles.

Pegoud flies a thousand feet in air and a field glass is needed to follow his maneuvers, but Chevilliard was often so close to the ground that he seemed almost able to touch it with his outstretched hand.

Football Tricks.

The hearts of Illinois University rooters jumped up into their throats recently when the Missouri University Tigers stepped out on the Illinois field and reeled off a touchdown on a curious trick play. The Missouri trick play is one in which the interference, followed by a man who plainly has the ball in his hand, starts out on a tackle brush. Just as the play is about to collapse a fleet tackle or end emerges from the mass going in the opposite direction with the "egg" tucked under his wing. It is very pretty, and Missouri worked it for a touchdown.

It seems strange that the Illini should be caught by a primeval trick like this—one that Missouri University teams have been using for four years. The play used to be more effective when the forward pass was allowed. Then the right half, following his interference in a (presumptive) hole off tackle, calmly shoved the ball at the left tackle, who was set for a sprint around right end. Under the present rules, which forbid forward passes except when made from a point five yards behind the scrimmage line, the tackle must be a bit more lively and step around behind the half back ere receiving the ball. It's very easy when you know how.

The objection is that a lively smashing end, following the play around, ought to be able to break it up every time. Now and then, however, the end forgets to follow around.

The "show-me" institution is the original home of many interesting football tricks, among them the "bowwow" play, whose unsuccessful use caused the resignation of Coach W. J. Monilaw, now instructor in physical education at the Chicago University teachers' college high school.

Monilaw was football coach at Missouri University for three years. After much experimentation in many systems of football attack he announced, previous to the football game of 1908 with Kansas University, that he had discovered an unbeatable play. He called it the "bowwow," and declared that the Jayhawkers would never be able to stop it.

It was a beautiful play—on paper. On the field, however, Monilaw's aggregation was unable to make it go. They tried it again and again, and each time they lost about twenty yards on the play. The "bowwow," as nearly

as any one understood it, consisted of a fake end run, two backward passes, and a long forward pass. The long forward pass was never made, for the Jayhawkers stopped the "bowwow" just after the two backward passes had been completed.

The "bowwow" was blamed for the Tigers' defeat in their big grudge game. Thereafter when Doctor Monilaw walked along the streets the small boys would bark after him:

"Bow-wow-wow-wow-wow."

Monilaw resigned.

Convicts Win Baseball Game.

Folsom Penitentiary convicts defeated Christian Brothers College, of Sacramento, 2 to 1, in a baseball game played at the penitentiary recently. It was said to be the first game ever played between a penitentiary team and an outside team. Convict No. 6,092 pitched effectively for Folsom, and his work was cheered by 1,100 of his fellows.

Old Crime Mystery Finally Solved.

Through a visit just made to western South Dakota by Miss Anna L. Hill, of New York City, representing the Children's Aid Society of that city, the mystery which for nearly thirty years enveloped the fate of Harry Tuttle, or Tuthill, a young man from New York City, who had inherited the sum of $50,000 from his parents, has been solved.

Tuthill got into bad company, became a member of a notorious gang of horse thieves, and, after the members of the band had been killed or captured by a posse of officers, was taken from a hospital and lynched by men whose identity never was discovered.

The investigation reveals an interesting series of episodes in Western history. Tuthill was a bright young man, absolutely lacking in any of the instincts which usually were associated with the "bad men" of those days, and must have drifted into such associations heedless of possible consequences and with a desire for excitement alone. He had the advantages of a good education and was the possessor of a fortune, but a desire to see and be a part of the wild West led him into a life which could have only one ending.

The Exelbee gang was, perhaps, the most notorious of the many bands of outlaws which infested the Black Hills region. It was composed of such men as John Campbell, Billy McArthur, better known as "Billy, the Kid"; Charles Brown, or "Broncho Charley," and Alex Gray, with George Exelbee as chief. In the winter of 1883-84 the curtain finally dropped on the long and bloody career of the Exelbee gang. The outlaws in their extended raids had visited the Indian reservations on the Missouri River and stolen a lot of Indian ponies. This brought them into direct conflict with the authorities of the United States and proved their undoing. A warrant was placed in the hands of Deputy United States Marshal Raymond, of Deadwood, who at once summoned a posse and started on the trail of the desperadoes. The outlaws, doubtless having been forewarned of the danger of being caught by the representatives of Uncle Sam, packed their personal equipment and started toward Miles City, Mont.

One of the posses, composed of Fred A. Willard and Jack O'Harra, of Spearfish, and Captain A. M. Willard, of Deadwood, overtook the five mounted bandits at Stoneville, Mont., where a desperate battle between pursued and pursuers occurred, resulting in the death of one of the officers, Jack O'Harra, and the mortal wounding of each member of the gang except Billy McArthur, who escaped unscathed.

Upon discovering the quarry the officers circled around to the northward and climbed a little eminence where they could command the situation. Willard called to Exelbee, "I have a warrant for your arrest." Instantly the outlaws turned and faced the officers and the shooting began on both sides. Willard's first shot struck Campbell, who threw up his hands and fell from his horse. About the same time O'Harra was heard to exclaim, "I guess I am killed."

About the fourth shot Exelbee was seen to throw up his hands and fall from his horse. He was shot through the groin and dragged out a miserable four days' existence at a deserted cabin before surrendering to death. With his dying breath he cursed the officers who had surprised and outwitted him.

The officers soon discovered Billy McArthur, who had taken refuge near by, from which point he had shot and killed O'Harra. During the fight in addition to the wounding and killing of the outlaws, the three pack horses and two saddle horses were killed by stray bullets, two saddle horses being captured by the officers.

Tuttle, who had sustained a shattered arm in the fight, was captured and taken to Spearfish, where he was placed in a crude frontier hospital. A physician examined his wound and decided that amputation of the shattered arm was necessary to save his life. The operation never was performed, for during the night a band of six masked and armed men entered the hospital where the sufferer lay, bound and gagged him, and carried him away, groaning with pain.

The next morning his rigid body, clad only in a thin cotton shirt, was seen swinging like a pendulum from the limb of a tree.

Boy Photographs Wireless Waves.

A boy has invented a device to photograph wireless waves. He is Marcus Goodrich, 16, of San Antonio, Texas, a high-school student. Goodrich has been conducting a series of experiments with John Rodriguez, another youthful wireless expert. Goodrich, as has been the case with all great inventors, did not make his "find" by experimenting once or twice. He has been conducting experiments in photography and chemistry for five years, ever since he was 11 years old.

The San Antonio boy began with a dollar camera, using it more for pastime than anything else. The mystery of its operation caused him to study it out, and he made a dark room, where he developed his own plates. He read and reread everything he could find on chemistry. Tesla, Ramsay, Bidwell, Thompson, and other noted scientists' works were well-thumbed volumes, and he repeated many of their experiments in his own small laboratory. Lately Bidwell's experiments in sending photographs by telegraph interested Goodrich, and he began working with selenium. The use of this element has just begun to be realized.

Goodrich had installed a platinum safety fuse in his electrical apparatus to protect the main fuse. He noticed that part of the platinum fuse became white-hot, and the next moment he found an exact reproduction of the heated part on a photographic plate that stood near the

fuse. Goodrich then began to think this "accident" out and began work on a great idea, the result of which was the photographing of the wireless waves the other day.

Speaking of his invention, Goodrich said: "The base and principal foundation of the process lies in the element selenium, which makes a perfect conductor of electricity in the light. Whether the light is from the visible end of the spectrum or from the end that has a light invisible to the naked eye makes no difference, for it is light, and selenium is sensitive to all light, visible or invisible.

"In darkness, however, selenium is a nonconductor of electricity. A selenium cell with a flat surface is inserted in the camera in place of a plate. This selenium cell is placed in the circuit of a positive wire from a wet battery, so that no electricity can come over the positive wire without first coming through the cell.

"Back of this, in an opaque cabinet, is a platinum cell, which consists of thirty fine platinum wires, arranged in form of a small screen, each wire insulated from the other. The right side of this platinum cell is connected directly with the negative pole of the battery, so that each of the little platinum wires receives part of the current. On the left side of the platinum cell is the positive wire coming from the selenium cell and connected to the platinum cell in the same manner in which the negative wire is connected.

"In this same opaque cabinet with the platinum cell, and in direct line and opposite to it, three-fourths of an inch away, is placed a highly sensitive photographic plate, backed by a small chamber filled with ice to keep the emulsion of the plate from melting when the current is turned on.

"Now, suppose we set the camera up on some dark night, set the wireless apparatus in operation, and open the shutter of the camera, thus exposing the selenium cell. Let us see what is happening. The waves of actinic light are constantly springing from the aërial and our photographic lens is constantly gathering them and placing them on the selenium cell. On this cell the positive part of the current is trying to get through, but cannot, because the cell is perfect darkness. But as soon as the lens concentrates the rays in the cell in the form of a picture, the current can pass through the cell and form a complete circuit.

"The positive current, meeting the negative current in the platinum cell, causes the cell to glow with a white heat in the shape and form of the wireless waves concentrated on the selenium cell by the lens. The photographic plate, being directly behind the platinum cell, gets the full benefit of the glow, thereby impressing on the photographic plate the exact reproduction of the picture concentrated on the selenium cell. All that is then needed is to develop the plate in the usual way, and the photograph of wireless waves is complete."

Drinks 3,000 Cups of Tea.

Nearly 3,000 cups of tea are annually drunk by each individual in Great Britain, for the estimate per head is about six and one-half pounds, says the Glasgow *News*. New Zealanders enjoy fully seven and one-half pounds per head, while less than one pound per head is credited to Russia. In 1912, 165,000,000 pounds of Indian tea were consumed, as against 148,000,000 pounds ten years ago.

A comparison might be made between the pot that stews all day on the hob and the morning teapot of the middle-class household. American women of taste will not even pour water on tea to make a second brew out of the same leaves. They habitually use the finest quality of tea, generally putting both China and Indian on the table, and after pouring of the infused beverage, the leaves are thrown away and a second supply put into the receptacle.

Unfortunately, in Britain, the same kind of teapot does service every morning. The mistress of the average home does not take the trouble to note new systems of producing better results than those already known. Where the cult of tea is really practiced, the same mixture is not served every morning.

Finder of $2,000 Out Six Cents.

A month ago Andrew Mandanis, of Cheyenne, Wyo., found a purse containing $2,000 in cash at the railroad station. Since then he has conducted a nation-wide search for the owner. He received a letter from W. I. McCleary, of San Bernardino, Cal., stating he was the owner of the money, and asking that it be sent to him. McCleary inclosed 4 cents in stamps. Mandanis contributed 6 sents and sent the money by registered mail.

Saw Sepoy Rebellion.

Mrs. William Butler, who died recently at Newton, Mass., at the age of ninety-eight, was known throughout the country as "Mother Butler," and was reputed to be the oldest missionary in the world. She was the widow of the Reverend William Butler, and the two spent practically their entire lives in preaching to the heathen in foreign countries.

"Mother Butler," although well advanced in years, was enjoying good health, and was in possession of all her faculties shortly before her death.

In July she participated in a party which was given in her honor on the occasion of her ninety-third birthday.

Mrs. William Butler had a most interesting career during the ninety-three years of her life. Born of English parents on Irish soil on July 30, 1820, with strong religious influences to bear upon her, she became a devout church worker.

Her maiden name was Clementina Rowe, and the place of her birth was Wexford, Ireland. When but a child past ten years, she became immensely interested in missionary work, being made a collector, in the Sunday school which she attended, for the missionaries, and always looked back with considerable interest to the $60 which she collected the first year.

Her wedding to the Reverend William Butler did not occur until November 23, 1855, he not being ordained to the ministry until after his arrival in this country. The wedding took place in Portland, Maine, and later, the couple removed to Lynn.

At this time, Alexander Duff came to this country and pleaded with the Methodists to establish a mission in India. The sum of $7,000 was pledged, and Mr. and Mrs. Butler were chosen to establish the mission in an untouched part of India. The couple sailed on April 8, 1856, being the pioneer missionaries of the Methodist Episcopal Church in India. The mission which they established is now the largest in India, with the exception of that carried on by the Church Missionary Society of the Church of England.

The Butlers had chosen Bareilly, in northern India, for their home, and were just beginning their work when they were forced to flee at the outbreak of the Sepoy mutiny.

Traveling day and night, through forests and jungles, in constant danger of wild beasts, and from the treachery of natives, they finally reached a place of safety in the heart of the Himalayas.

Their hiding-place was discovered, however, and they were forced to flee from place to place, until, with the fall of Lucknow, the mutiny was finally ended. Mrs. Butler was the only American woman who saw the horrors of this mutiny, when so many thousands of Europeans were slain.

After the country had quieted down, Mr. and Mrs. Butler again took up their missionary work, and prosecuted it for eight years. But a good beginning had been made, and when Mrs. Butler visited the country and the scenes of her labor, in 1906, she found there 194,000 Methodist communicants among the natives.

Surgeon Operates on Man in Mid-air.

With one shoulder dislocated and the other arm so badly bruised that he could not move it, as the result of an accident while he was working on a tall theater building, at Springfield, Mass., Frank Armbrewster, a structural-iron worker, was helpless at a dizzy height, as there was no means of descent except by ladders. Doctor E. C. Collins climbed to the top of the building, and sitting astride a steel beam, chloroformed Armbrewster and snapped into position the dislocated bones. After the operation the man was able to make his way down the ladders.

Can't Tell the Monkeys Apart.

Charles Snyder, head keeper in the Zoölogical Park, in New York, is no great student of Shakespeare, but he said recently that within a year he had been forced to read the "Comedy of Errors." At present he has two Dromios on his hands, and a comedy of errors with them. This is a comedy of the reptile house, and the confusion has arisen because of the similar appearance of Koko and Nig, the two little, woolly monkeys from the valley of the Amazon. Koko and Nig are of exactly the same size. They are both brownish-black, with just the suggestion of a white mark on the chest. Both, Snyder declares, chatter in the same voice, and both have the same mannerisms. Both have the same taste in food, and both have learned the same little tricks. Which is Koko and which is Nig is a question that has to be asked daily and carefully considered before the reply is given.

The climax came when, several weeks ago, Koko was taken ill. The little fellow got off his feed and lost his good temper. Snyder reported to Curator Raymond Ditmars, and it was decided to put Koko on a diet. The slightest indisposition on the part of either animal causes much worry among the keepers, for both are exceedingly delicate. So much so that they are kept in the warm reptile house instead of occupying a cage in the monkey house. Koko had been eating too many bananas and other fruit.

The pair occupy adjoining cages in the inner room, a sort of hospital and feeding place. Snyder instructed Toomey, "the keeper," to put Koko on a diet. The instructions were at once carried out, but Toomey made the mistake of putting Nig on the diet instead of Koko. Despite Nig's protest, Toomey kept cutting down the supply of fruit and salad, and also deprived Nig of his dessert of peanuts. Nig, under this benificent treatment, lost flesh. His especial aversion was a hot-water bottle, which he was forced to sleep with each night. While his health improved on certified milk, his temper did not, and from having a sunny disposition, Nig got to be an ill-humored monkey.

"How's Koko?" Ditmars asked one day.

"Doing fine," Snyder confided, with an air of personal triumph. Now, the strange part of Snyder's story is that Koko began to pick up from the very minute that Nig was placed on a diet. Snyder, who is a student of animals, is of the opinion that his improvement was due to the satisfaction he got out of seeing Nig under heroic treatment. His theory is that Koko has a highly developed sense of humor. Koko enjoyed, during these days of diet, an increased food supply, for he got much of what Nig used to get.

It was Palmer who discovered that a mistake had been made. He is the personal attendant of Koko and Nig, and he is about the only one who can, with any degree of accuracy, tell them apart. In this he is guided by a peculiar gesture of Nig in drinking. When the mistake was discovered, however, both animals seemed well, Nig having had the benefit of diet, and Koko of increased food.

Koko and Nig have caused a comedy of errors ever since Nig arrived at the zoo, about a year ago. Koko had been there for some years. At first, the keepers could tell them apart because Koko was more friendly. Nig was frightened by his new surroundings in the reptile house. The little monkey soon became as friendly as its companion, however, and so, within a very few weeks the keepers began to be at a loss to tell which was which. It was necessary that each preserve his identity, for the authorities have to keep a record or chart of the physical condition of each, and to regulate his feed by it. It is only by such precautions that the pair have survived their stay in this country.

It is easy to keep track of them when they are in their adjoining cages, but when once they are taken out, the difficulty is to get them back where they belong. As the temperature is kept at the tropical point in their room, the pair are often turned out of their cages and allowed to exercise by scampering all about the place. In order that there might be no mistake, Palmer, before liberating them, used to tie a piece of red string about Nig's arm.

This was all right, according to Snyder, until Koko, one afternoon, took advantage of the absence of the keeper, untied a string from Nig's arm, and retied it about his own. It was nearly two weeks before it was discovered that Nig was Koko and Koko was Nig.

In an effort to solve the problem, Snyder taught Nig to salute when called upon by name. Koko, from the next cage, watched proceedings with interest. It took an expenditure of much effort before Nig would give the military salute at the word of command.

"Now we can tell them apart," said the satisfied Snyder. The keepers could. The plan worked for about two days. On the morning of the third day, Toomey, giving the word of command in front of Nig's cage, was surprised when Koko walked to the front and gravely saluted, as well as Nig.

"There seems to be a natural bond of sympathy between the two animals," said Snyder. "It is a remarkable fact that not only do the pair look alike and act alike, but one seems to be on the constant watch to ape the other. Teaching one, for the purpose of identification, is useless. It is

a peculiar fact that both have an aversion to red, and a fondness for violet."

So the problem of the two Dromios is still an unsolved one. Palmer is the only authority on the subject, and he admits he is not infallible. When showing the pair off, Snyder always has to call a consultation before he is sure.

"Which is Koko to-day?" he will ask pleasantly of Palmer.

"Call them, and see," the latter will respond quickly, for he resents what he calls Snyder's sarcasm.

Call Nig, and both will come to the front of their cages. Call Koko, and the same thing happens.

"I give it up," said Snyder wearily yesterday, after his seventh attempt to finally identify them.

And Palmer—he smiled.

Mother Finds Lost Daughter in Dream.

A dream so vivid that it led a mother to travel nearly 1,000 miles came true with the reunion of Mrs. Marian A. Dexter, of Chicago, and her daughter, Alice C. Dexter, for whom she had been searching for fifteen years.

Mrs. Dexter, in Chicago, dreamed that she found her daughter living with the family of James S. Slocum, in Moravia, N. Y. Mrs. Dexter was so impressed that she journeyed to Moravia and found the dream true.

Fifteen years ago Miss Dexter's parents decided to separate at Boston, Mass. Mrs. Dexter at once went West, moving recently to Chicago. She had lost all trace of her daughter. Mr. Dexter died in New York a year ago. The daughter, who is a painter, had been visiting the Slocum family for a week.

Travel 1,441 Miles in Open Boats.

Relating a story of shipwreck stranger than fiction, Captain Charles Neilson, his wife, and year-old son, and a crew of eleven men, of the wrecked barkentine *Amaranth*, arrived in San Francisco recently from the South Seas.

For thirteen days the twelve mariners and the woman, clinging to her baby, braved the storm-swept South Seas, traveling 1,441 miles in two frail, leaky, 20-foot open boats, suffering from exposure, starvation, and thirst.

August 30th, the *Amaranth* left Australia for San Francisco with 2,000 tons of coal, and ran aground on the coral reefs of Jarvis Island. It was night. Everybody took to the boats. Battered and banged by the sea, with boats leaking, they finally landed on the island, three hours later.

They found Jarvis Island a desolate waste, without water. To stay there meant death. Fanning and Christmas Islands, the nearest habitated land, were only a few hundred miles away. Contrary winds and currents made it impossible to reach them. The nearest other inhabited island was Samoa. In leaky boats it was next to impossible to attempt the voyage.

"What'll we do?" asked First Officer A. M. Johnson.

"Patch the boats and take a chance," replied Captain Neilson.

The crew, braving the sharks, waded out to the ship at low tide, and secured a scant supply of canned goods and water. Captain Neilson took his wife and baby, the cabin boy, the Japanese cook, and a few sailors, and started for Samoa.

At Danger Island the skipper expected to replenish his water supply. But before they got there the water ran out—except a few pints, which the men refused to touch, leaving it for the woman and her babe. Finally this was gone. They were still two days from Danger Island. The tropical sun beat down with parching intensity. It looked as if the the babe would die. Then came a squall. They caught enough water to last until they made the island.

A small keg of the brackish stuff gathered from rock crevices on Danger Island lasted them until they got to Samoa. On September 15th, six hours after, First Mate Johnson and his exhausted companions had dragged their boat onto the beach.

Loses Gold on Flip of a Cent.

How two Alaska prospectors flipped a cent for discovery claim at the new gold diggings near Marshall City, on the Yukon River, is told by W. T. Ogler, a California mining man, the first arrival in Seattle from the reported new strike. Ogler is on his way south for the winter.

"Too little work has been done so far to warrant a statement on the diggings," said Ogler, "but, if nothing else, it may develop into a good dredging proposition. The strike was made by a man named Rhodes, but he flipped a cent with his partner, 'Shorty' Gletchen, for discovery claim, and lost it.

"The only gold has been found eight miles from Marshall City on Wilson Creek, where the creek has washed into a gravel bank. About six feet of gravel showed at this point. The discovery was made too late to do much work this year, and when I left, only about six cents a pan was taken out at this point."

Three weeks after the discovery was reported, the entire locality was staked, according to Ogler. Marshall City is a little more than three hundred miles from Nome. Wilson Creek is about twelve miles long. W. W. Johnson, a dredge owner of Nome, has sent men in with a test drill, expecting to put in a dredge next spring if it seems worth while.

"Wild Man" is Harmless.

Is a man insane, "wild," an undesirable or otherwise an enemy of "society" and a fit subject for the inside of a prison, simply because he elects to give up the chase for the dollar in favor of the less strenuous and more wholesome life of a semirecluse, with his house in a hollow stump and his food, honestly obtained, all shorn of the frills of "modern civilization"?

This question is occupying the Marin County, California, authorities in the case of Anthony Benkle. Benkle is heralded as "wild" and "uncivilized," despite the fact that he reads, writes, dresses à la mode, and tills the soil.

Benkle is as "harmless as a kitten," in the words of Sheriff J. J. Keating, his captor. But he is unable to speak well, and apparently is suffering from a lapse of memory, due, he indicates, to being struck on the head.

Recently, Anthony Benkle was dragged from his tree-stump home, his vegetable garden, and his hermit life in the woods near Camp Taylor, and thrust into a dark cell in the Marin jail. He objected by gesticulations, explaining that he was not a criminal. No charge was placed against him.

On the evening of his incarceration he was provided with a meager meal of beans, potatoes, meat, and bread. Much to the astonishment of his jailers, peering through the bars, the "wild" one cut his meat into tiny bits with

his knife and conveyed them to his mouth with his fork. Afterward he complained, by signs, because no sugar nor cream was provided for his coffee.

The next morning, heralded to the world as a "wild" man, he laughed when shown the morning papers, and made signs that some one other than he was insane. Later, when taking a bath, the "wild" man did not offer to eat the soap, but used it unsparingly, and showed himself familiar with its purpose.

Sheep to Trap Fever Tick.

To trap the spotted-fever ticks with sheep is the latest plan for the eradication of the pest in Montana.

The free grazing of 2,500 head of sheep upon the Bitter Root national forest has been authorized by the secretary of agriculture. The Forest Service and the Public Health Service are working with local sheep growers in this campaign.

It is the general belief of leading medical authorities that typhus, or spotted fever, is spread by the tick *dermacentor andersoni*, which, in parts of the Bitter Root forest, occurs in such numbers that it constitutes a real menace to man and beast.

Of domestic animals, the sheep is the most readily handled and the easiest to dip or treat, hence its selection for use in the experiment.

First Socialist Sheriff.

Louis A. Welsh, the first Socialist sheriff elected in the United States, assumed office in Schenectady, N. Y., on January 1st. He was the only Socialist elected on either the city or county ticket.

Mr. Welsh has been a candidate for the office for three successive times. Five years ago he polled only 37 votes. Two years ago, the year of the Socialist landslide, he lost to the Republican candidate by fewer than a hundred votes, and this year he got a plurality of 1,058. He is a steamfitter.

Pigeon Hatches Chicken.

Christopher Krough, a Minneapolis dairyman, asserts that a little fantail pigeon has just hatched out a chicken egg on his place. Dairyman Krough avers and affirms that the chicken is not only a chicken, but a Shanghai chicken at that.

Just about what is going to happen in the proper rearing and bringing up of the chick by its midget mother has put the Krough household to wondering.

So far, according to the hired man of the Krough farm, who also attends church, the little mother is perfectly satisfied with the result of her efforts, and as proud as any young mother ought to be. He said that even father pigeon hustles around for worms and other pigeon baby foods, as any father should.

But the part that Krough is wondering about is this: All bird fanciers know that squabs are raised on pigeon's milk, a soft, saccharine, and glutinous substance not unlike condensed milk, which forms in the throat of the pigeon mother. The effect of this wonderful nature food is that a squab, ten days after hatching, weighs more than the mother.

Already the mother pigeon is feeding the young Shanghai this flesh-and-feather-growing food. Just what the result will be the dairyman does not know, but he anticipates probably the most wonderful-sized Shanghai ever seen in this or any other country, and one that will sit up and take notice. How its parents are going to make it mind after it gets its growth is another serious problem. Dairyman Krough and family are wondering how the little mother will be able to keep it in nights.

The way it all happened, according to the churchgoing man, is that recently he found the little pigeon mother sitting on an egg laid by a Shanghai hen in an old feed box. The egg was moved to a more secure place and the two foster parents took turns sitting on the lone egg until it was hatched. The outcome of the situation and the future development of the child will be watched with much interest by Dairyman Krough and his neighbors, and also the churchgoing hired man, whose truthful reports may be depended upon.

This Boy Not Discouraged.

Floyd E. Fisk, of Anderson, Mo., a member of the Boys' Corn Club, was asked by an agent of the department of agriculture for a report on his corn crop. The drought had ruined Master Fisk's crop, but instead of a negative report from a disappointed boy, he sent the following:

MY CORN.

No use for a boy to look forlorn
When it's too dry in the Ozarks to grow good corn.
He can feed the fodder to the goats,
And throw the nubbins to the shoats.
I have done the best that I know how—
I used the harrow, then the plow;
I plowed it deep and close at first,
Then plowed it shallow to quench its thirst;
But it remained as dry as dry could be.
I looked and looked and looked in vain—
If I do not succeed, I'll try again!

Australia Mine Accidents.

In the mines, other than coal, of New South Wales during 1912, 31 men were killed and 32 seriously injured. This is a death rate of 1.565 per 1,000, and is slightly more than the average for the last five years. In Queensland, the number of deaths was 26, and the number of accidents 198, for the same year. This corresponds to a death rate of 2.45 per 1,000, and is the highest obtaining in Queensland since 1888. Of the 26 fatal accidents, two occurred in shafts, 11 were due to falls of ground, and five were the results of accidental explosions. These figures, taken from the annual reports of the mining departments of the two states in question, show that Australia is far ahead of the United States in the question of mining safety. The death rate in the United States being somewhere between four and five, it is evident that it has a long way to go yet before attaining the standard set by the southern commonwealth.

The cause is not far to seek. Conditions in American mines are not essentially any more dangerous, and the character of our labor is as high, or higher. It is simply that, in Australia, public opinion, as reflected in the actions of government, has done its work. The great interest taken by state governments in the question of safety is well evidenced in the reports mentioned. The Queensland report, for instance, contains a complete list and detailed analysis of all the accidents occurring during the year, the study of which is sure to be of the greatest value as indicating the line along which accident prevention must move.

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